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Michael Duncan Overton

*University of Tennessee*

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I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Michael Duncan Overton entitled ""Living It In The Day To Day": Narratives of Advanced Martial Artists." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Educational Psychology and Research.

Ralph G. Brockett, Major Professor

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Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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# **“Living It In The Day To Day”: Narratives of Advanced Martial Artists**

A Dissertation Presented for the  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Degree  
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Michael Duncan Overton  
December 2017

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all my peers, colleagues, and professors for supporting me and listening to all my crazy ideas. Thank you all for encouraging me to persevere throughout this process. I would like to thank Sensei Tyrell and Sensei Takata for seeing in me someone who was worth investing their time and effort to train. I would like to thank my committee members for their direction and assistance through this process. Thank you Lars for the constant reminders of keeping the practical aspects of the study in mind. Thank you Joel for the constant reminders of “so what” and why this is important. Thank you Lauren for the friendship and mentorship of the qualitative methods used for this study. And thank you Ralph for the encouragement, support, and direction to complete this study. Most of all I would like to thank my wife, Mandy, who has had the most unenviable task of being my constant sounding board, emotional support staff, and best friend.

## ABSTRACT

Western perspectives of learning often marginalize other-ways-of-knowing. A need to further understand other-ways-of-knowing, in particular non-Western perspectives, is a growing concern of the adult and continuing education field. Prior research supports the martial arts as a non-Western and other-way-of-knowing. However, the adult and continuing education field have underutilized the martial arts in research. The purpose of this narrative study was to explore adult learners' lived experiences of learning and practicing martial arts in the southeastern United States of America. The two research questions that guided this study were "What experience(s) led adult learners to practice martial arts?" and "What are adult learners lived experience(s) of learning and practicing the martial arts?"

Due to a perceived lack of any existing theoretical frameworks' ability to capture the holistic nature of the participants' experiences, a new theoretical framework was created for this study. This unique framework draws upon three established paradigms for support: (a) Social Constructivism, (b) Embodiment/Embodied Learning, and (c) Narrative Knowing. Each paradigm was selected for the importance it places on the role of experience within the meaning making process. The theoretical framework was specifically designed to honor the participants' experiences of other-ways-of-knowing.

Having established a theoretical framework, narrative inquiry was selected as the methodology to best answer the research questions. Using narrative inquiry methods, nine participants were interviewed for this study. These interviews ranged from an hour to an hour and a half in length and were transcribed verbatim by the researcher. These transcripts were then analyzed utilizing a six-phase analysis process.

This analysis process uncovered four themes that were present in each participants' narratives: (a) Change, (b) Interaction, (c) Embodiment, and (d) Way of Life. The findings from

this study support previous martial arts research and lay the foundation for future research into the martial arts, other-ways-of-knowing, and embodiment. This study also has implications for martial artists and practitioners of somatic and embodied practices. The experiences of the participants echo my own experience with the martial arts and illustrate the importance of continuing this line of inquiry.

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## CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

In the West, learning is often perceived as being acquired through formal schooling methods, in which knowledge is validated through rigorous scientific research and empirical evidence (Merriam & Associates, 2007). This Western paradigm is largely influenced by Cartesian dualism, which promotes a mind/body separation, and values the cognitive and rational mind above all else (Merriam & Associates, 2007; Michelson, 1998). This Western epistemological and ontological perspective marginalizes “other ways of knowing” (Taylor, 1997), which adult learners use to make meaning of their experiences (Crossley, 2007; Michelson, 1998). Other ways of knowing have been conceptualized in adult learning and education literature through: creativity, intuition, empathy, emotion, recognition of the power of the unconscious, affective learning, extrarational influences, guiding force of feelings, spiritual dimensions, relationships, role of context, formal and informal environments, somatic, whole person and embodiment (Dirkx, Mezirow, & Cranton, 2006; Taylor, 1997, and 2008; Taylor & Snyder, 2012).

In the modern era, the field of Western adult education (i.e., specifically American perspectives) has been shifting toward a global focus, retraining adult learners and educating for global competencies (Merriam & Brockett, 2007). In order to facilitate this new direction, in adult learning and education strategies, an understanding of non-Western perspectives on the foundations of adult learning and education within the ever-expanding global community is needed (Hermans & Kempen, 1998; Merriam, 2007). Non-Western perspectives are defined as having their “roots in cultures and...traditions that pre-date Western colonization, modernization, and Western-driven globalization” (Merriam, 2007, p. 173). Non-Western perspectives possess the ability to confront the societal norms that are taken for granted and

challenge the predominant assumptions and biases within a culture (Reagan, 2005). A popular form of non-Western learning that has rapidly gained exposure in Western cultures is the martial arts (Cox 1993).

Martial arts (e.g., judo, karate, aikido, tae kwon do, and others) are examples of rapidly expanding and non-Western ways of education and learning that have become a global phenomenon, with mainstream appeal to diverse adult learners from all corners of the globe (Fuller, 1988; Ko, Kim, & Valacich, 2010). The rapid expansion and influence of the martial arts has drawn adult learners to the practice for various reasons. Some are drawn to the health-related benefits associated with the practice of the martial arts (Draxler, Ostermann, & Honekamp, 2011), while others see the martial arts as a way to build confidence and obtain other socially acceptable values (Aindow, 2013; Rosenberg & Sapochnik, 2005; Twemlow, Sacco, & Fonagy, 2008). The martial arts also draw those who seek a leisure activity (Gim, 1998) and those who may be more inclined toward the physical forms of conflict and aggression that can associated with the martial arts (Aindow, 2013; Ko, Kim, & Valacich, 2010; Rogowska & Kuśnierz, 2013; Twemlow, Sacco, & Fonagy, 2008). Some adult learners are interested in the Eastern or non-Western ways of knowing and understanding that are foundational concepts to the study and practice of the martial arts (Hackney, 2010; Lowry, 2010).

The field of martial arts research that has emerged due to its rapid expansion in the West, has examined the adult learners from many perspectives (Fuller, 1988; Vertonghen & Theeboom, 2010). These perspectives draw from a diverse number of academic fields such as psychology, kinesiology, sociology, education, and health. Recent topics of interest within quantitative and qualitative research focus on the motivations of learners to participate in the

martial arts (Ding, Chen, Zou, & Tian, 2015; Ko, Kim, & Valacich, 2010; Rogowska & Kuśnierz, 2013) and health-related benefits and therapeutic applications of the martial arts (Aindow, 2013; Draxler, Ostermann, & Honekamp, 2011; Rosenberg & Sapochnik, 2005; Twemlow, Sacco, & Fonagy, 2008). Other research addresses teaching approaches of the martial arts (Vertonghen, Theeboom, & Cloes, 2012), autoethnographic reflections of the transformative journey of the martial artist (Fontaine, 2002; Noy, 2015), and conceptualizations of embodiment and holistic teaching and learning experiences (Channon, 2012, and 2013; Channon & Jennings, 2014; Siapno, 2012; White & Miller-Lane, 2011). These perspectives rely on the experiences of the adult learner, usually within a specific discipline of the martial arts such as aikido, karate, and judo. However, the typical focus of these studies is on either the beginning martial art student (Fontaine, 2002) or the “system expert” (Noy, 2015) (i.e., teacher of the martial arts). The experiences of the advanced martial art student, a martial artist that falls between the beginning student and system expert, are rarely considered within this body of literature. Only a small sample of recent studies have addressed the experience of the advanced martial art adult learner who practices the martial arts (Channon, 2012, and 2013; Channon, & Jennings, 2014; Siapno, 2012; White & Miller-Lane, 2011). More research on advanced martial arts students is needed.

The field of adult education has largely overlooked the embodied experience, especially that of the adult martial artist, as an other way of knowing. Instead, favoring an examination of embodied and holistic practices from other fields of study such as motor learning and vocational skills based education (Roessger, 2012), whole person learning through the profession of adult education practice (Yorks & Kasl, 2002), wisdom (Bassett, 2003), and sensory knowing through autobiographical narratives (Bach, Kennedy, & Michelson, 1999).

However, some other ways of knowing examined within the adult learning and education literature overlap with martial arts research. These are *somatic* approaches to teaching and learning (Amann, 2003; Beaudoin, 1999; Brockman, 2001; Matthews, 1998; Sellers-Young, 1998), the sociological paradigm of *body* within social conflict (Levine, 2007), and *embodiment* in health psychology (Ghane & Sweeny, 2013), workplace learning (Somerville & Lloyd, 2006), and social work (Sodhi & Cohen, 2012).

The non-Western cultural roots of the martial arts have led many of its adult practitioners to view the learning and practice of the martial arts as a lifelong path, way of life, and journey; which incorporates the mind, body, and spirit into the meaning making process (Brown & Johnson, 2000; De Crée, 2013; Hackney, 2010; Lowry, 2010; Martínková & Parry, 2015; Sato, 2011). Many researchers (Hart, 1996; Kamis & Muhammad, 2007; Kee, 2007; Merriam, 2007; Thaker, 2007) have described this embodied, holistic, and journey-like nature to meaning making and knowledge formation as being an integral part of non-Western perspectives of knowing. The concept of embodiment illustrates how the field of martial arts research is a potential avenue for exploring ways to connect Western adult education and learning practices to a broader global context. So, I ask this question, as adults, how do we learn?

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this narrative study was to explore adult learners' lived experiences of learning and practicing martial arts in the southeastern United States of America.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions that guided the study were:

1. What experience(s) led adult learners to practice martial arts?



2. What are adult learners lived experience(s) of learning and practicing the martial arts?

### **Theoretical Framework**

In order to honor the co-constructed nature of narratives, the study utilized the embodied narrative knowing theoretical framework, which combined theories and concepts drawn from three established theoretical paradigms. These concepts were drawn from theories that guide the field of adult education and learning. The approach used to theoretically frame the study honors the struggle to co-construct the understanding and meaning of adult learners lived experiences of learning and practicing the martial arts, by allowing their stories to be shared in a holistic manner set against the social backdrop of their embodied experience. Three primary concepts shaped the theoretical framework for the study: Embodied Learning, Social Constructivism, and Narrative Knowing.

#### **Embodied learning**

Embodied learning and knowing incorporates the mind, body, and spirit into the meaning making process. Brown and Johnson (2000) incorporated Bourdieu's post-structuralist theory to analyze how an embodied practice may become habitus and its potential social benefits. Channon and Jennings (2014) examined empirical literature about martial arts and combat sports (MACS). They focused on embodiment, defining it as, "research centered on the living, moving and feeling social experiences of human beings" (Channon & Jennings, 2014, p. 773). Crossley (2007) examined embodiment through Marcel Mauss' concept of body techniques, which he purports allows sociologists to "consider the purpose, normativity and embodiment of action as those various aspects cohere in a unified structure" (Crossley, 2007, p. 81). Samudra (2008) spoke about voicing kinesthetic traditions and how verbalizing through language falls short of expressing the somatic experiences which become "embedded in the body-mind" (Samudra,

2008, p. 667). Freiler (2008) defined embodiment as, “generally refer[ing] to a broader, more holistic view of constructing knowledge that engaged the body as a site of learning, usually in connection with other domains of knowing...by incorporating unity of mind and body in the process of knowing through both objective and subjective realms of knowledge construction” (Freiler, 2008, pp. 39-40). Embodiment, as an other-way-of-knowing, challenges the dominant hegemony of Western ontological and epistemological perspectives of how we come to be and make meaning of our experiences (Taylor, 1997). Embodied learning includes the body and other ways of knowing in the meaning making process, alongside the rational and cognitive mind favored in many Western learning paradigms.

### **Social Constructivism**

The theoretical framework is also supported by elements from a social constructivist paradigm. Merriam and Brockett (2007) point to multiple strains of constructivism, rather than a single guiding theoretical framework. From diverse fields of study such as math and science education to cognitive development and knowledge construction, these strains merge in common notions of the subjective reality of experience and that “knowledge is the meaning that people make out of their experiences” (Merriam & Brockett, 2007, p. 46). Researchers within the constructivist paradigm believe that knowledge and the meaning that is ascribed to experience is a socially constructed process (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). This social constructivist approach favors the interactions that individuals engage in with themselves, the other, and the environment as the basis for how we come to know and understand ourselves and the other, through the construction of what is known through lived experience.

## **Narrative Knowing**

The socially constructed nature of lived experiences has been shaped in research through the retelling of stories (Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2013). Stories, or narratives, are often purposeful and convey meaning through the interaction of the teller and audience, especially through the co-constructed tellings and retellings of experience (Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2012; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 2008). No story is without a point (Polanyi, 1985; Wilensky, 1983) and narratives can be used to frame our identities, understand our experiences, and tell our stories. Narratives can also be told and understood through the present storytelling body, the embodied story, and the represented body (Hyden, 2012).

## **Embodied Narrative Knowing Theoretical Framework**

I have termed the theoretical framework conceptualized for this study embodied narrative knowing. Embodied narrative knowing incorporates the concepts of a holistic approach to the interaction of the mind, body, and spirit into the meaning making process. This framework honors the learning and knowing that is associated with experiences, both felt and lived. Embodied narrative knowing narrows the scope and focus of the study to the importance of the engaged interaction with the other, and the socially constructed nature of lived experiences. The theoretical framework is comprised of the three paradigms previously discussed (i.e., embodiment, social constructivism, and narrative knowing), as well as the role of experience as the common element that binds the three paradigms together. The social constructivist paradigm highlights the socially constructed realities that dictate this ontological and epistemological way of knowing. Narrative knowing is co-constructed through the meaning making process and allows the learner to interact with the “other.” This interaction leads to a co-construction of a more holistic shared experience, facilitating the learner’s ability to interact and impact the others

reality and experience through an embodied process. We wear our stories. This framework is represented in Figure 1.

### **Significance**

The significance of this study applies to three domains: practitioners of the martial arts, cross-cultural research, and the entirety of the fields of adult education and martial arts research. Practitioners of the martial arts will find this study significant depending on the level of experience and role they inhabit within the martial arts. From a beginning student's perspective, this study will give a glimpse into what those above them in rank and experience have gone through and what might be in store for them as well. Though everyone's journey is different there may be similarities that are more meaningful coming from a peer, in the advanced student, rather than the story of a teacher or sensei. Teachers of the martial arts will find this study significant as a form of reflection. This study will allow them to remember what those who study underneath them are going through. A contribution to the practice of teaching the martial arts is giving instructors an academic language for what they are already doing in their everyday teaching practices, strengthening the practice of teaching and learning the martial arts through theory driven adult education research.

The second domain that will find this study significant is that of cross cultural research, specifically martial arts research and comparisons between Western hegemonic ideologies and non-Western approaches. This study begins the exploration of a situated awareness within martial arts. The contexts of the participants' narratives are dominantly Western, but originates in distinctly non-Western practices. This study addresses a gap in the literature, a lack of perspectives from adults who practice the martial arts and consider themselves to be advanced martial arts students. By uncovering this piece of the puzzle, a more holistic picture of the

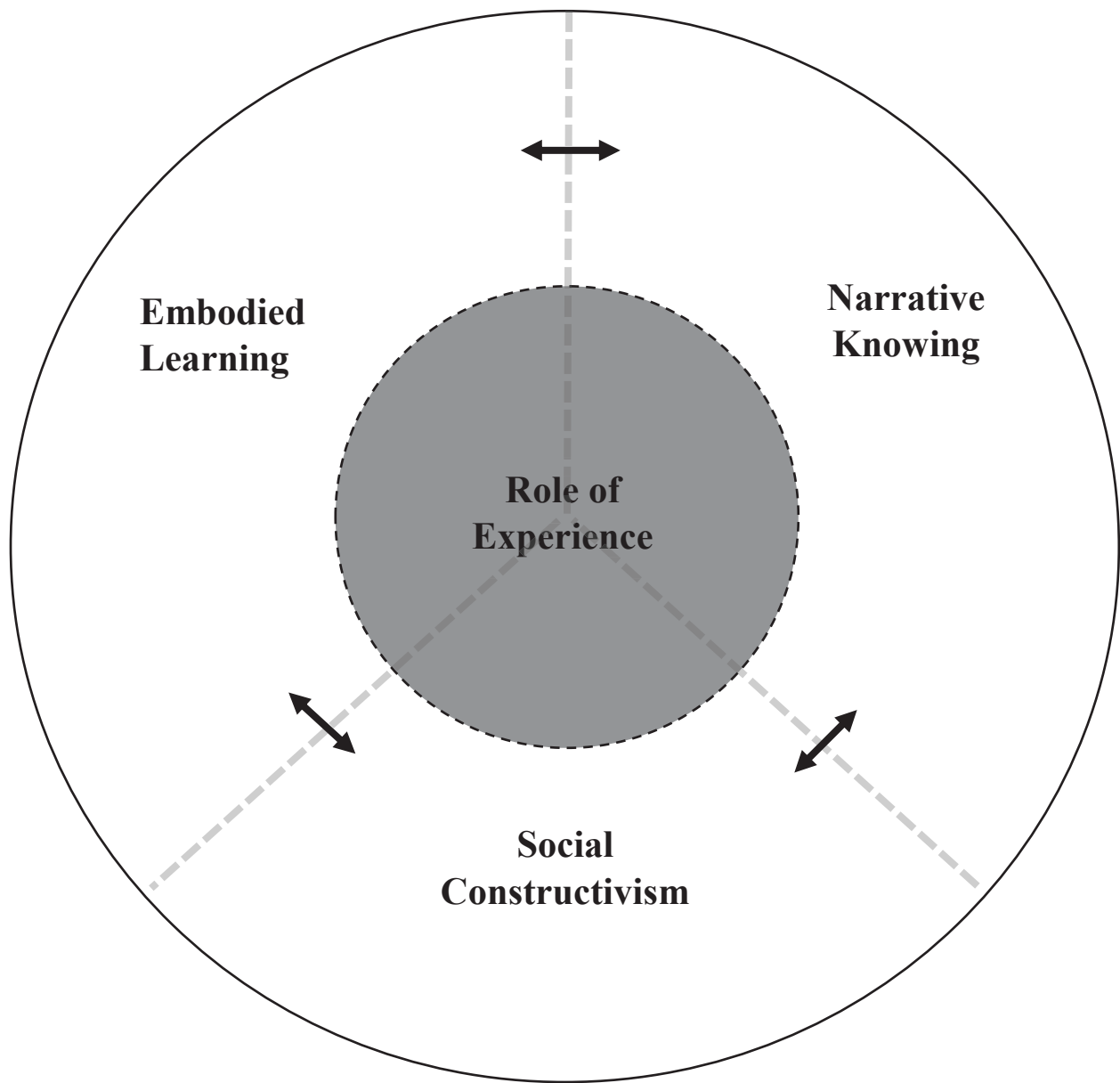


Figure 1 *Embodied Narrative Knowing Theoretical Framework*

martial arts, as practiced in the United States of America, can begin to take shape. This may lead to a comparison of other martial arts practices, both within Western and non-Western cultures.

The third domain to find significance in this study are the fields of adult education and martial arts research. This study adds to the scholarly research and literature in the field through an exploration of an example of a non-Western practice that embodies adult experiences as viewed through adult education and learning concepts. The study provides a common research language, through the field of adult education and learning, which martial arts researchers can utilize when describing and exploring the experiences of adult martial arts students. This allows for an increase in the communication and impact of martial arts research in other cross-disciplinary fields of study. As it stands, there are various definitions for what constitutes a martial art in academic literature, such as combat sports (Vertonghen & Theeboom, 2012), and Teaching Approach in Martial Arts framework (TAMA) (Vertonghen, Theeboom, & Cloes, 2012). These definitions extend beyond specific martial art disciplines like judo, aikido, kendo, karate, and tae kwon do, and there is no agreed upon definition by researchers of martial arts at this time. This study brings martial arts researchers one step closer to an agreed upon definition of the martial arts. It also addresses the need for global and cultural awareness through an examination of a practice that is non-Western and incorporates other ways of knowing and approaches to teaching and learning (i.e., incorporation of mind, body, and spirit; embodied learning and embodiment; and holistic ways of knowing). This awareness may spark an interest in a cultural practice that was not readily known to the adult educator and learner.

### **Delimitations**

There are several delimitations that clarify the boundaries of this study. First, the participants interviewed self-reported and identified as adults. Much of the martial arts literature

focuses on youth and adolescent martial artists (Ko, Kim, & Valacich, 2010; Lakes & Hoyt, 2004; Theeboom, De Knop, & Wylleman, 2008). The adult learner's experience of being a martial artist is often neglected in the quantitative data or is only viewed as an outcome of the practice through health-related benefits (Draxler, Ostermann, & Honekamp, 2011), motivational strategies (Ko, Kim, & Valacich, 2010), and therapeutic applications (Aindow, 2013; Rosenberg & Sapochnik, 2005; Theeboom, De Knop, & Wylleman, 2008; Twemlow, Sacco, & Fonagy, 2008).

Second, the participants self-reported and identified as advanced martial arts students. Qualitative data generated in this field often incorporates adult learners but draws from the experiences and stories of those who are considered masters or teachers of their martial arts, "system's experts" (Noy, 2015, p. 9), or beginning adult student perspectives (Fontaine, 2002; White & Miller-Lane, 2011). Underrepresented in the field of martial arts research are the stories and experiences (Theeboom, De Knop, & Wylleman, 2008) of those who fall in between this dichotomy, advanced students. This population's contributions to martial arts research typically consists of filling out survey questions that are then used to measure certain variables of martial artists such as motivation to participate in martial arts (Ding, Chen, Zou, & Tian, 2015; Ko, Kim, & Valacich, 2010), personality types (Wargo, Spirrison, Thorne, & Henley, 2007), health-related benefits (Draxler, Ostermann, & Honekamp, 2011) and the therapeutic benefits of practicing the martial arts (Twemlow, Sacco, & Fonagy, 2008).

Third, a geographical delimitation was placed on the study. Due to funding and financial constraints as well as conducting face to face interviews with the participants, the geographical area from which I recruited participants for this study was limited to a region in the Southeastern United States of America.

## **Limitations**

There are several limitations that were considered for this study. First, the participant's self-identified level of expertise in the martial arts varied. This variation in the term "advanced" spanned across disciplines and styles of martial arts which could have resulted in a lack of themes that connect the narratives together. Second, the study relied on the stories of the participant's experiences of learning and practicing the martial arts. There was a risk that some participants may provide false experiences in order to placate the research questions. Third, the diversity of participants in regard to race, ethnicity, age, and gender were considered and the homogeneous nature of a limited geographical sampling area could have resulted in limitations placed on the study. This lead to a narrow representation of the experiences of learning and practicing the martial arts due to the situated awareness of the geographic delimitations.

## **Assumptions**

There are several assumptions that accompanied this study. First, it was assumed that the participants accurately, honestly, and openly re-told their stories and experiences of learning and practicing the martial arts. Second, all of the participants interviewed for the study were adult martial arts students who self-identified as advanced martial arts students (i.e., neither beginning nor masters). Third, my own experience of the martial arts was intertwined in the re-telling and co-construction of the participant's narrative.

## **Summary**

This dissertation is organized into five chapters, a reference list, and appendices. Chapter Two presents a literature review that will briefly define and map adult education and learning theories onto recent martial arts literature, in order to explore potential adult education and learning theories that became evident through the interview and analysis process conducted for



the study. It will also present literature on how embodiment is considered as an other way of knowing. Chapter Three addresses the methodology and qualitative research design that was selected for the study. The interview protocol, procedures that were followed, and discussion of the sample selected is described in Chapter Three as well. Chapter Four relates the findings of the interviews including vignettes of each participant's story along with their individual and distinct categories and sub-categories that emerged from their narratives. There is an analysis of all findings from the interviews and other data sets as well as accompanying figures and themes generated from the analysis. Chapter Five summarizes the study and discusses the findings from Chapter Four as they relate to the established research bodies of literature. There is also consideration for implications for action and recommendations for further research.

## **CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW**

Chapter Two is divided into two sections, each representing the distinct academic fields that guide this study. The first section reviews the body of research literature on the martial arts. This is divided into two primary parts: (a) quantitative martial arts research, and (b) qualitative martial arts research. The second section illustrates the intersection of martial arts research and the field of adult learning. This intersection situates the martial arts within the framework of other ways of knowing, primarily ways of knowing that value the body as a seat of knowledge. The literature review concludes with a conceptualization of embodiment and embodied learning, which show how the field of adult learning can add to the rapidly expanding field of martial arts research, and a critique of martial arts research that this study will address.

### **Martial Arts Research**

The practice of martial arts has always been a transformative experience, a way of life (De Crée, 2013, Martínková, & Parry, 2015, and Overton, 2014). However, this practice is often negatively perceived by others as a way of conflict, fighting, and aggression (Aindow, 2013; Rogowska & Kuśnierz, 2013). These stereotypes are continually perpetuated through the lens of popular media through examples such as cage fighting, movies, and television (Aindow, 2013). Any attempt to rationalize the experience through cognitive processes is difficult at best, which may explain the need for understanding the martial arts through stereotypes. To be a martial artist means to learn from experiences, not just the meaning and knowledge that comes from the cognitive interpretation of experiences but the somatic, embodied, and spiritual understanding that is constructed by interaction with the other (Martínková, & Parry, 2015).

The field of martial arts research is diverse with recent research interest ranging from motivational strategies of martial artists (Ko, Kim, & Valacich, 2010) to concepts of embodiment

and identity (Siapno, 2012). There have been previous reviews of martial arts research. Fuller (1988) examined martial arts research focusing on personality, aggression, social influences, and through psychotherapy. Fuller's (1988) conclusion was that the research surrounding martial arts "lacks a coherent theoretical base from which to proceed" (Fuller, 1988, p. 326). A recent review of martial arts research, which speaks to a primary theme of this study, was conducted by Channon and Jennings (2014). Their review focused on martial arts and combat sports (MACS) and the interconnectedness pertaining to embodiment. A conclusion that Channon and Jennings (2014) drew from their review was that research concerned with MACS and embodiment coalesced around four themes: (a) body cultures, (b) body pedagogies, (c) the embodiment of gender, and (d) bodily harm. Furthermore, they framed a path for potential future research trajectories, similar to many discussed in Chapter Five of this study.

The martial arts research presented in this review was selected to illustrate the exemplars of martial arts research and the direction the field has been moving toward since 2000. Presented in Table 1 are the dominant categories that recent martial arts research falls under, along with the researchers who conducted the studies. These will be discussed in the order presented in Table 1 throughout the chapter. The rationale for discussing the literature in this manner stems from the different foci in quantitative approaches and qualitative approaches to the martial arts.

### **Recent Quantitative Research**

Quantitative research that examines martial arts typically focus on the outcomes of the practice of martial arts on participants through quantitative measurements (Vertonghen & Theeboom, 2012). Focusing on research since 2000, exemplar quantitative articles fall into three broad categories: (a) motivation of participants and non-participants, (b) physical and mental health issues, and (b) specific outcomes of the martial arts on youth and other related factors.

Table 1 *Dominant Categories of Martial Arts Research*

Category	Researchers
Quantitative Research	
Motivation	
Motivational Strategies	Ko, Kim, & Valacich, 2010
Maintaining Interest	Ding, Chen, Zou, & Tian, 2015
Attitudes about Martial Arts	Rogowska & Kuśnierz, 2013
Youth Outcomes	
School Based Practices	Lakes & Hoyt, 2004
Outcomes of Youth Interventions	Vertonghen & Theeboom, 2012
Health-Related Benefits	
Health-Related Quality of Life	Draxler, Ostermann, & Honekamp, 2011;
Psychodynamic Psychotherapy	Twemlow, Sacco, & Fonagy, 2008
Qualitative Research	
Health-Related Benefits	
Comparison of Martial Arts and Psychoanalysis	Rosenberg & Sapochnik, 2005
Martial Therapy	Aindow, 2013
Psychosocial Benefits for Adolescents	Theeboom, De Knop, & Wylleman, 2008
Teaching	
Teaching Approach in Martial Arts (TAMA)	Vertonghen & Theeboom, 2012; and Vertonghen, Theeboom, & Cloes, 2012
Beginner's Mind	Fontaine, 2002; and Noy, 2015
Embodiment	
Gender	White & Miller-Lane, 2011
Masculinity	Channon, 2012
Mixed-sex Inclusivity	Channon, 2013
Cultural Identity	Siapno, 2012

**Motivation.** Ko, Kim, and Valacich (2010) examined the motivation of 307 martial artists at the 2004 Battle of Columbus Martial Arts World Games IV, “one of the most popular martial arts events in the US” (Ko, Kim, & Valacich, 2010). Their study was designed to understand motivational factors that led individuals to participate in martial arts. Their analysis showed that fun, physical fitness, and a “sport-specific characteristic” (p. 118) of aesthetics, play a prominent role in determining “why people participate in the martial arts” (p. 118). These findings supported previous research (Boudreau, Folman, & Koznak, 1995; Jones, Mackay, & Peters, 2006; Twemlow, Lerma, & Twemlow, 1996) which focused on motives of participating in risky sports and sport participation in general. Ko, Kim, and Valacich, (2010) also found that their sample perceived the most important benefit of martial arts was personal improvement and personal growth in areas such as achievement, self-esteem, and value development (Ko et al., 2010).

Ko, Kim, and Valacich (2010) determined that the specific type of martial art, level of experience, and past experience all play an integral role in determining the motivation of an individual to take part in a martial art. However, this study’s focus was not on the participant’s experience of the martial arts in the moment but rather on the consumer driven business model that has sprung up around the proliferation of the martial arts in the West, and how to tap into the motivations of those who are and can potentially become martial artists.

Another example of motivational strategies can be found in the work by Ding, Chen, Zou, and Tian (2015) in which the differences motivating participants to practice martial arts was investigated. Ding et al. (2015) administered an instrument designed to measure motivation for Chinese Martial Arts to 310 participants at the International Chinese Martial Arts Championship. The results of the instrument showed significant differences for participant’s motivations to

practice martial arts. These differences exist on the basis of “gender, practice experience in martial arts, style of Chinese martial arts engaged in and membership type” (Ding, Chen, Zou, & Tian, 2015, p. 63). Ding et al. (2015) results support those of Ko, Kim, and Valacich (2010), finding that “individuals participating in various forms of sport can be motivated by different factors and affected by their individual characteristics” (Ding et al., 2015, p. 53). Similar to Ko, Kim, and Valacich (2010), Ding et al. (2015) appeared to be guided by the consumer driven mindset of finding ways for traditional Chinese Martial Arts to compete for a market share of a growing martial arts field.

Rogowska and Kuśnierz (2013) studied attitudes of non-participants of the martial arts in which they measured separate factors that might contribute to participation and overall view of the martial arts. This study found that gender and age did not factor into the influence on non-participant attitudes toward martial arts. Instead the “intention of participation in combat sports and martial arts, as well as the stereotype concerning the brutality of martial arts and combat sports, turned out to have a significant influence on the attitude” (Rogowska & Kuśnierz, 2013, p. 188). Rogowska and Kuśnierz (2013) concluded that in order to change the stereotype of brutality associated with the martial arts that broad education and “knowledge as the basic constituent of the attitude can be a motivating factor stimulating the intention to participate actively in combat sports and martial arts” (p. 188).

Rogowska and Kuśnierz (2013) proposed a focus on motivation for participation in martial arts, not out of consumerism but out of education. They believed that as a growing interest in physical activity and physical culture in Polish society emerges and martial arts are introduced to address this need that “education and the stimulation of children’s interests in valuable forms of combat exercises” (p. 189) is needed.

**Youth Outcomes and Teaching Practices.** In order to educate and stimulate children's interests in the martial arts, school based approaches, social intervention strategies, and other contextual factors have been researched. Lakes and Hoyt (2004) examined the impact of a school-based martial arts training program on students' self-regulatory abilities. A sample of 207 students were randomly assigned "to either the intervention (martial arts) group or a comparison (traditional physical education) group" (Lakes & Hoyt, 2004, p. 283). After three months the results indicated that the outcomes being measured were significantly impacted by the assignment to the martial arts intervention group. Measures of cognitive self-regulation, affective self-regulation, prosocial behavior, and classroom conduct (Lakes & Hoyt, 2004) showed greater improvement for the martial arts group than did the control.

Vertonghen and Theeboom (2012) examined the various contextual factors that influence outcomes of youths practicing martial arts. The contextual factors they identified were "structural qualities of the martial arts (i.e., type of martial art), the type of guidance, characteristics of the participants, and their social context" (Vertonghen & Theeboom, 2012, p. 237). They found that the characteristics and social context of the participants was important to consider when measuring certain outcomes of practicing martial arts, such as aggressiveness, other behavioral problems, and goal orientations. They cite discrepancies in previous research findings that polarize the levels of aggression attributed to the practice of the martial arts. Their claim is that more contextual factors should be considered when researching the martial arts with regard to outcomes since not every martial art is the same (Vertonghen & Theeboom, 2012).

On differences between martial arts there is also the consideration of the type of guidance that is offered by the instructor. Vertonghen and Theeboom (2012) identified three approaches among martial arts teachers; a traditional approach, educational-sporting approach, and an

efficiency approach (Vertonghen & Theeboom, 2012, p. 239). A traditional approach emphasizes a traditional aspect and pedagogical orientation; an educational-sporting approach still holds to the traditional aspects but the martial art as a whole is considered more as a sport; and an efficiency approach is focused on the competitive aspect and effectively performing the techniques (Vertonghen & Theeboom, 2012). Due to the variation that exists between the martial arts and within each martial art in regard to the teaching style, Vertonghen and Theeboom believed that the teaching approach rather than the martial art style itself is the more important contextual factor when studying the martial arts.

**Health-Related Fields.** Draxler, Ostermann, and Honekamp (2011) investigated whether individuals who practiced Asian martial arts, compared to those who do not, gained any “health-related quality of life benefits” (Draxler, Ostermann, & Honekamp, 2011, p. 57). The results of the study indicated that the practice of the martial arts did provide health-related benefits when compared to those who did not practice any martial art. This study found that the greater differences were seen as physical benefits to health more so than psychological benefits. Draxler et al. (2011) concluded the study by offering suggestions of more studies that measure longitudinal effects and looks at “both subjective and objective measures of health, resistance to illness, and injury rates” (p. 63).

Twemlow, Sacco, and Fonagy (2008) believed that the martial arts along with other somatic and kinesthetic movement practices are potential “linking objects” for a therapeutic relationship. “Thus in the context of combined physical and psychological work, establishing these links in the consciousness of the patient, a process we call embodiment, helps make sense of the shattered thoughts and affect that lead to violent actions” (Twemlow, Sacco, & Fonagy, 2008, p. 3). This study offered numerous examples of research that support the beneficial health



aspects of practicing martial arts for all ages: from children with autism who were treated using a creative movement therapy to the impact of Tai Chi for elderly patients in improving their balance, thus reducing the incidents of falling.

Through the context of psychodynamic psychotherapy Twemlow et al. (2008) viewed the martial arts and other physical movement “as a critical link in reaching the violent, nonmentalizing individual who is ‘acting out’ aggression” (Twemlow et al., 2008, p. 28). This study viewed the goal of the martial arts in this context as creating a “safe container and a non-coercive social context, which allows violent individuals a chance to re-tool their experiences under the guidance of a healthy ethical role model” (p. 29). There is agreement and support for the claims of this study that can be found in other research, however there is a distinct lack of focus on the individual’s interpretation of their experience of practicing the martial arts and a heavy reliance on the outcomes that can be measured as a result of a post hoc analysis of the observable outcomes.

Motivation to practice martial arts was examined through both sports and competition primed participants and also non-participants of martial arts. Findings from these studies are complementary in stating that there are often times different motivations for practicing the martial arts and also for avoiding them. The next section addressed the martial arts practice of adolescents. The findings reported here pointed toward a positive trend in the psychological affects seen in the adolescent participants, which are a potential consequence of both the type of martial art practiced and the type of instructor. Finally, health-related benefits of the martial arts were examined. Within the therapeutic relationship the martial arts can be considered a vehicle for the acting out of aggressive tendencies, potentially benefiting nonmentalizing individuals.

Recent research has also corroborated findings from past research on positive health-related benefits found in those individuals who practiced martial arts as opposed to those who have not.

### **Recent Qualitative Research**

Considered for this review was recent qualitative research that addresses the martial arts. The research selected are exemplars of qualitative martial arts research and broadly fall into three categories: (a) therapy or therapeutic process, (b) teaching, and (c) embodiment.

**Therapy/Therapeutic Process.** Rosenberg and Sapochnik (2005) examined the practice of martial arts and its embeddedness in popular culture. This study explores the popularity of the martial arts and why individuals are motivated to participate in it through the lens of psychoanalysis. Through conversational dialogue Rosenberg and Sapochnik (2005) summarized that,

“martial arts operates in popular culture at two levels...In actual personal practice, martial arts offer the individual the opportunity to experience something that he may have not known he was searching for: psychic integration...As taken up by popular media, martial arts become a vehicle for the representation of omnipotent manic fantasies. Yet, paradoxically, they may also enable recognition of the value of commitment, inner search and engagement with an other” (Rosenberg & Sapochnik, 2005, p. 457).

Rosenberg and Sapochnik (2005) explored this relationship through a comparison and contrast of martial arts and psychoanalytic terms and techniques. Drawing upon popular cultural references such as Star Wars and the “aesthetics of psychoanalysis...verbalization, timing and joint understanding” (p. 456). The strongest link, between the martial arts and psychoanalysis discussed, is the development by both practices of a “specific and distinctive symbolic

discourse” (p. 454). Rosenberg and Sapochnik (2005) believed that the medium psychoanalysis utilizes is language and the martial arts uses movement. Psychoanalysis gives the analyzed space to speak into whereas martial artists are “given a structure of movement to inhabit” (p. 455).

Aindow (2013) utilized a psychoanalytic framework to explore the therapeutic abilities of martial activities for individuals “whose relationship to normal therapy may not be an option” (Aindow, 2013, p. 229). Through her experience as a martial artist and martial therapist, Aindow believes that there is social value to the martial arts that goes beyond what can be expressed through dialogue and discourse (Aindow, 2013). Aindow believed that the draw of the martial arts and its increase in popularity is in part due to the “one to one rivalry format” (p. 230) or conflict. This produces a conflict where the potential exists to work through the body on therapeutic levels as well as “broader sociocultural spectrums” (p. 231).

The martial arts works through psychotherapy by cultivating the concept of fear (Aindow, 2013). The rivalry through conflict with the other induces fear and through the practice of the martial arts the individual learns to control their fear. This sense of control is produced by an increase in the sensation and tensions of fear that the body experiences, becoming aware of the familiar feelings and responding through bodily movement. The practice of the martial arts in this context promotes a learning through the body, which develops between the therapist/trainer and the student through conflict. “With words of authority, power and guidance, anxiety is induced in a safe environment bridging, in turn, a new relationship to the word which relates to...their state of unconscious anxiety” (p. 236). Key to this is the role of the instructor as the “other” or “rival.”

Aindow's (2013) analysis of two case studies illustrates that through martial therapy the dialogue became "organic and transformative" (Aindow, 2013, p. 238) contrasting with the participants previously lived experiences. This led to the "development of emotional and mental health" (p. 238) centered around conflict and through the body's free expression of drives that would typically bring about "antisocial effects" (p. 238). This analysis brings the body to the forefront of experience through the martial arts. However, the focus on conflict as the primary means of driving participation and therapeutic process may down play the other aspects at work through the practice of the martial arts, thus limiting the scope and applicability of the research.

Theeboom, De Knop, and Wylleman (2008) conducted interviews with individuals who either taught martial arts or were coordinators for social initiatives targeted to integrate socially vulnerable youths in Belgium. Through the interviews themes emerged that support previously discussed research in regard to the positive psychosocial benefits of the martial arts and the important role of the teacher in the relationship. These themes indicated participant motivation in the initiatives was increased because of the fact that the martial arts were offered. The prominent aim or goal stressed by the respondents for engaging the youth in the martial arts was the "importance of providing youth with a meaningful leisure activity and help them to bring structure into their life" (Theeboom, De Knop, & Wylleman, 2008, p. 308). The effects of the martial arts on the youth participants, that their respondents indicated, were all positive "including self-control, discipline, and self-esteem" (p. 309).

Finally, the role of the teacher and the way training was conducted were identified by the respondents as being important for the relationship. The qualities that the respondents listed as being essential characteristics of a teacher were "receiving respect, building confidence, being a friend, having patience, having good martial arts competence and willingness to listen" (p. 310).

They also listed that mutual trust and understanding in the relationship was more important than an authoritarian relationship. Although the respondents indicated that the martial arts were beneficial to youth development they also believed that “similar effects can...also be obtained through involvement in other sports” (p. 313). However, the respondents and organizations chose martial arts due to their perceived attractiveness to the target population.

Theeboom, De Knop, and Wylleman (2008) illustrated that just organizing a martial arts program is not sufficient enough to indicate a positive effect on youth outcomes or to maintain their involvement in the martial arts. This supports previous research that stresses the role of the teacher and their relationship with the student as vital to the motivation to begin and continue with the martial arts. The researchers believed that “teachers in these kinds of initiatives are not only expected to have good sports technical and pedagogical skills but also need to use a more general educational approach” (p. 314). Aindow (2013) and Theeboom, De Knop, and Wylleman (2008) illustrated the importance of the teacher in the martial arts relationship, not solely the martial arts practiced within the therapeutic process.

**Teaching.** Vertonghen, Theeboom, and Cloes (2012) examined the teaching approaches in martial arts, believing that it is hard to know if martial arts teachers “teach”, “train”, or “entertain” (2012). Based on the three teaching approaches established by Vertonghen and Theeboom (2012), their study utilized a “Teaching Approach in Martial arts framework or TAMA” (Vertonghen, Theeboom, & Cloes, 2012) to analyze 20 martial arts teachers through observation and interviews in order to establish a better understanding of the different dimensions involved with each teaching approach.

Based on the teachers’ scores on the TAMA, and the interviews that were conducted, participants were placed into three groups (e.g., traditional, educational sporting, and efficiency).

These scores and interviews examined seven characteristics that the researchers believed were indicative of teaching approaches of the martial arts. The seven characteristics that comprise the TAMA are (1) goal of teaching, (2) opening and closing ritual, (3) ability groups, (4) sparring, (5) use of traditional or efficient techniques, (6) teaching techniques by an analytical of a global method, and (7) response to inappropriate behavior during training (Vertonghen, Theeboom, & Cloes, 2012). This study's results indicated that certain considerations to the teaching approaches categorized the teacher into one of the three categories. However, the researchers did not endorse one category as better than the other, instead finding that some similarities existed between the groups leading to a speculation that each martial arts teacher may be situated on a spectrum. The researchers believed that the "different teaching approaches might have a distinct effect on participants' experiences" (p. 201) and that future research should pay particular attention to how the students perceive these different teaching approaches.

Fontaine (2002) reflects on her journey of learning the martial art of karate and how it has implications for her own practice as a professor. Following along on her journey the reader is allowed to view her initial apprehensions and constant struggles with learning the martial art. The scramble for language and how to make sense of the new and different environment of the dojo compared to her comfortable academic domain of the classroom emerge as prominent themes of her narrative. The theme of critique and reflection, both in the dojo and with her interactions with her own students also play an important role in her analysis. Fontaine claims that she has "opened her mind to an art and tradition that seemed very different" (Fontaine, 2002, p. 221) initially but found that her reflection on "each illuminates the other" (p. 221). She viewed both practices as organic and ultimately liberating from the rules that are imposed on both writing pedagogies and the practice of karate. Fontaine believes that by holding onto a

beginner's mind of practicing karate she can see the respect for her students grow and has experienced a shift in awareness of her impact within the classroom (Fontaine, 2002).

Noy (2015) documented a similar journey of reflection on the experience of teaching qualitative research methods and his practice of aikido. Noy (2015) addressed the concept of the beginner's mindset illustrated by a key concept of aikido, "shoshin-ni-kaeru" (Noy, 2015, p. 9). Noy (2015) positions this concept to remind himself as the teacher or "system's expert" (p. 9) to approach new students at their "eye level" (p. 9). This involves simplifying the material for easier accessibility because as the process of experience grants skills and expertise so does the gap between the student and teacher widen (Noy, 2015). This reflection, both on and in the process, illustrates an embodied concept of being aware of the process and the effect that the teacher is having on the processes. This reflection could potentially have been brought about through the rational processes of discourse and dialogue, but is shown to have an origin in the somatic and embodied principles learned through the practice of the martial arts.

Noy (2105) recognized both aikido and qualitative research as an Art, believing that "both are fields in which knowledge is produced, shapes, shared and transmitted through embodied interaction and dialogue between the participants/practitioners" (p. 17). He argues that through this recognition of an embodied interactional link arises a challenge to the "authoritative, monologic and static definitions of knowledge" (p. 17).

**Embodiment.** Empirical research on embodiment through the martial arts has been explored by Channon and Jennings (2014). Similarly, the articles selected for the present review focus on a selection of particular issues of embodiment in the martial arts that challenge taken for granted definitions of knowledge. The way embodiment is approached in these articles address

gender (White & Miller-Lane, 2011), masculinity (Channon, 2012), mixed-sex inclusivity (Channon, 2013), and cultural identity (Siapno, 2012).

White and Miller-Lane (2011) approached the topic of gender as it relates to the martial arts and their experience as practitioners of aikido. Initially setting out to investigate how the typical gendered norms of a “dojo framed and limited the experience for both men and women”, White and Miller-Lane (2011) discovered an experience that transcends the normative influence of gender. Labeling this as “ungendered interaction” (White & Miller-Lane, 2011), the experience is shaped through cooperation with the other rather than through conflict (e.g., Aindow, 2013). This cooperation leads to an awareness of this connection between each participant that results in a sharing of power that is neither masculine nor feminine (White & Miller-Lane, 2011). Through this connection, practice, and reflection on their experiences of aikido, conceptions of the “self” become meaningless. Both researchers claimed societal parameters of gender are replaced with a blending and attempt to stay connected with the partner through Ki (i.e., energy). This illustrates the potential of the martial arts to embody a concept such as gender and how it can challenge the “gendering of self that is enforced and structured on multiple levels of self and society” (White & Miller-Lane, 2011) allowing for a new experience, a new way of knowing to emerge.

Channon (2012) continued this focus on gendered self in the martial arts, relying on interview data of British men who practice an Eastern martial art. He explores how the men position their “self” compared to Western sport ideas of masculinity and their “imagined uniqueness of their martial arts to construct a sense of moral superiority over other men” (Channon, 2012, p. 111). These alternative versions of physical culture challenge a dominant image portrayed as masculine in Western sports (Channon, 2012).



Channon (2013) also addressed the integration of the sexes in the martial arts, which challenges the stereotypical male and female segregation that persists as “ubiquitous across all forms of (Western) sports” (Channon, 2013, p. 1295). By doing away with the organizing category of sex, new avenues and ways of being are opened up to the participants that “fall outside” (p. 1294) of the normative cultural context. This allows for new embodied experiences to occur which otherwise would never have existed. Through the 37 interviews conducted, Channon noted that the interviewees recognized that “coercive sex segregation” (p. 1295) was rare with “sex integration” (p. 1295) being the norm for the martial artists. This was elaborated in the interviews by the stories of women who are involved with multiple levels of the martial arts, ranging from sparring partners to coaches and teachers.

Channon (2013) then shifted from a sporting aspect of the martial arts to a self-defense aspect highlighting the importance of mixed-sex integration in the martial arts. The interviews revealed a focus on the realism required to practice techniques to their fullest extent, illustrating the more serious connotations of such a practice, life and death. By having women practice with men, for a self-defense aspect, not only was realism being injected into the practice but a path to challenge the dominant discourse of female victimization was being illuminated. This was “aimed at overcoming the effects of such structures by transforming the ways in which women think about and perform within their bodies” (p. 1302).

Siapno (2012) discussed in her ethnographic work about the dance traditions and martial arts training of rural citizens in Timor Leste, highlighting “how speaking beyond trauma is articulated through body movements” (Siapno, 2012, p. 427). Drawing on field notes, interviews, fieldwork experiences, film footage and photography Siapno analyzed when and how participation in dance and martial arts emerges out of the traumas of war and colonization of

Timor Leste. These traditions of embodiment speak to the “resilience of cultural identity in a post-war, post-revolutionary, [and] post-conflict environment” (p. 427). Her focus illustrated how the individual and community involvement in the embodied practices of dance and martial arts serves as a “denial of victimization as the primary form of agency, and possibly, of resistance to a state of ongoing conflict” (p. 428).

Qualitative research on the martial arts speaks to the practice as being organic, meaningful, and transformative for the participants. These positive aspects of practicing the martial arts were instilled by the participant through the relationship with the teacher. This aspect of teaching the martial arts was also explored in relation to cross-disciplinary efforts of teaching and keeping a beginner’s mind (Fontaine, 2002; Noy, 2015). Finally, embodiment in the martial arts research literature was explored through aspects of gender, gender interactions, and mixed-sex inclusivity. Also, the martial arts and embodiment were examined as a way to promote the empowerment of cultural identities in response to colonization. The concept of embodiment discussed in the preceding section on martial arts research is the primary intersection between the fields of martial arts research and adult learning and education. The next section reviews research that identifies, describes, and defines how embodiment and embodied learning are conceptualized in the field of adult learning through a critique of transformational learning theory.

### **Embodiment in the Adult Learning Context**

“What one wants to learn, what is offered, and the ways in which one learns are determined to large extent by the nature of the society at any particular time” (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007, p. 5). With a rapid expansion in globalization, adult learning in the Western context must seek to expand its horizons beyond rigid geographic borders. To

this end some adult education and learning scholars have sought a non-Western perspective on how adults learn. These scholars and researchers primarily work from the transformational learning theoretical framework.

Transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1978) is one paradigm in the field of adult learning that addresses non-Western perspectives. However, it is brought to the forefront of this literature review through a critique of the theory and as something that needs to be more deeply investigated. Perspective transformational learning theory, also known as transformative learning theory, was originally proposed by Jack Mezirow (1978). Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007) claim that “transformative or transformational (terms used interchangeably in the literature) learning is about change -- dramatic, fundamental change in the way we see ourselves and the world in which we live” (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007, p. 130). Mezirow and associates (2000) define transformative learning as:

the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted-frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action. Transformative learning involves participation in constructive discourse to use the experience of others to assess reasons justifying these assumptions, and making an action decision based on the resulting insight. (pp. 7-8)

Fisher-Yoshida, Geller, and Schapiro (2009) also present transformative learning theory as a process where critical reflection and engagement of experience through rational dialogue about assumptions, results in the transformation of the assumptions and frames of reference that were

previously utilized to make meaning and how we come to be in the world (Fisher-Yoshida, Geller, and Schapiro, 2009).

The role of experience is “integral to learning” (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007, p. 144). Adults bring to the learning environment a wealth of experience that influences how they learn and interact with their environment and others. Merriam et al. (2007) believe that the ways in which experience “can be used in learning differs according to one’s theoretical orientation” (Merriam, et al, 2007, p. 144). Transformative learning theory begins from this role of experience within the meaning making process, when an experience is unable to be reconciled or fit into a previous frame of reference. Mezirow proposed a series of steps that transformations often follow: (a) A disorienting dilemma; (b) Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame; (c) A critical assessment of assumptions; (d) Recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared; (e) Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions; (f) Planning a course of action; (g) Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans; (h) Provisional trying of new roles; (i) Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships; and (j) A reintegration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s new perspective (Mezirow & Associates, 2000, p. 22).

The primary critique of transformative learning theory comes from Taylor (1997) who mentions several research initiatives which address the limitations and “encourage[s] a reconceptualization” of transformative learning theory through his review of the literature. Taylor (1997) mentions that the “minimization of the role of critical reflection and increased role of other ways of knowing” (Taylor, 1997, p. 55) are worth the time and effort of future researchers. Mezirow and many other researchers of transformative learning believe that critical reflection is significant--if not the most significant--process to transformative learning (Taylor,

1997). However, Taylor examined research that “found...critically reflective learning processes consist of more than just the critical thought strategies generally thought to comprise them...In other words, transformative learning is found not to be just rationally-based, but is reliant on intuition, other ways of knowing, and empathy” (p. 47). Taylor believes that the criticisms of the “over-reliance on rationality has led to studies that have shown the essentiality of “other ways of knowing” (p. 48). These studies refer to the “significance of intuition...affective learning...extrarational influences...and guiding force of feelings” (p. 48). One particular study focused on “whole person learning” defined as an “awareness and use of all the functions we have available for knowing, including our cognitive, affective, somatic, intuitive, and spiritual dimensions” (p. 48). These critiques point to a possible deficiency in solely relying on critical reflection and rational discourse to promote a transformation in a person’s perspective.

The critique of critical reflection and its over reliance by Mezirow and others in transformative learning theory, as well as a need for more research on other ways of knowing, is renewed in Taylor and Snyder’s (2012) review of the research. However, both concepts have been merged into a single issue addressed in different areas of the research that Taylor and Snyder examine: multiple theoretical frameworks, cross-cultural research, growing significance of relationships, and fostering transformative learning (Taylor & Snyder, 2012). Taylor and Snyder (2012) state that “there is a movement among researchers using additional theoretical lenses, beyond Mezirow’s conception” (p. 41). Some of the researchers include “Belenky, and Stanton, Boyd, Dirkx, Kegan, Tisdell, O’Sullivan, Freire, Dewey, Mead, and Vygotsky” as well as “specific theoretical perspectives such as Afrocentrism...critical theory...critical social theory...and new grief theory...additional theoretical lenses were used primarily because the

dominant conception...did not adequately capture the assumptions on which the study was based” (p. 41).

The use of different theoretical lenses demonstrates a move away from an over reliance on critical reflection, finding areas other than just the mind and cognitive processes as being valid seats of knowledge and meaning making. This evolution of transformative learning theory ushers in an expansion toward other ways of knowing, such as those embedded in cross-cultural research which focus more on the context of the learning: family, gender, and spirits in an Afrocentric lens which “shaped the participants’ interpretation of the experiences” (p. 43).

Most notably in the adult learning research and literature, concerned with other ways of knowing, is the work by Merriam and Associates (2007). Their book, *Non-Western Perspectives on Learning and Knowing*, examined a selection of non-Western perspectives of adult education across the globe. These perspectives challenge dominant Western hegemonic ontological and epistemological assumptions. However, these challenges are not raised by tearing down the Western models; instead the non-Western perspectives promote a union of both the mind and body (as well as other contextual factors) into the meaning making process.

### **Mind/Body Split**

When discussing Western approaches and non-Western approaches to making meaning of our experiences it is helpful to describe what has historically identified their demarcations. Michelson (1998) points to the “day that René Descartes severed his body from his head” (Michelson, 1998, p. 217) as the moment in which modernity and Western knowledge practices began. Michelson believes that this separation required a “rejection of the physicality of the self” and that it led to a belief that we are “saved from emotion by the clear light of reason, able to separate moral judgments from personal desires and loyalties, and undisturbed by the

implacable demands of the body” (Michelson, 1998) or what Descartes called “only a thinking thing” (Descartes cited in Michelson, 1998, p. 218).

This approach to knowledge and meaning making has been evident as early as Plato and Aristotle (Jung, 2006), and has been defined by feminist theorists as “abstract masculinity” (Michelson, 1998). Michelson cites Bordo in stating that “[T]he key characteristic of abstract masculinity is detachment from whatever ties the knower to a contextualized human life: emotions, loyalties and interests, memories, responsibilities to others” (Bordo, cited in Michelson, 1998, p. 218). Michelson and others view this as an act of not only bodily dismemberment, separation of mind and body, but also a social dismemberment; a removal from one’s own socio-historical context in order to legitimize knowledge.

In the field of adult learning and education there is evidence of this divide in theories that are at work in much of the research. The critique of many adult learning theories, specifically transformative learning theory, for the over reliance on rational thought processes for making meaning, such as critical thinking (i.e., removing oneself from the experience to analyze and critically reflect on it, also reflection on action) and discourse, can easily be uncovered (Taylor, 1997). These processes focus on the mind and its cognitive and rationalizing capabilities. Taking information about an experience and reflecting on it after the initial interaction negates the body as a site for knowledge. From a non-Western perspective, Silva (2002) introduces two contemporary Japanese thinkers who conceptualize the sociology of the body in a more integrated manner than other previously discussed Western sociologists. This manner of integration does not limit the body to the self by pinning down the mind within a solely physical body. Rather, Silva (2002) stated that the real problem of studying embodiment within current

theories and paradigms is that the “conceptual foundations on which those disciplines are based” (Silva, 2002, p. 37) should be shifted and expanded.

However, there are some adult learning and education scholars who have been challenging this separation of mind and body through their research. Levine (2007) illustrated how the body can be understood—as well as a place for understanding through social conflicts—there is also mention of how the “Cartesian split between body/mind” (Levine, 2007, p. 39) has come under scrutiny from other fields; especially those relating to education. Notions of intelligence have “been expanded well beyond its earlier restricted sphere, to include a number of different functions including audiovisual powers, interpersonal skills, emotional capacities, and language abilities” (p. 39). Levine also claims that the “body itself has come to be theorized as the seat of a number of powers of its own, involving kinesthetic perceptual abilities and movement skills, and has come to be understood as participating intimately in all of the other powers” (p. 39).

Sodhi and Cohen (2012) wrote about integrating embodied knowing into the practice of social work (Sodhi & Cohen, 2012). In order to establish a foundation to work from they first introduced the “mind/body dichotomy” that has defined much of the adult education research and literature. They cite other education scholars who have addressed this dualism, such as: Brookfield (1987), Kolb (1984), and Schön (1983), who view “ways of learning and meaning making, such as experiential learning, critical thinking, situated cognition, and reflective practice which reflect this mind/body dualism” (Sodhi & Cohen, 2012, p. 121).

Sodhi and Cohen (2012) point to other authors who have voiced a “growing dissatisfaction with this mind/body split, leading to an exploration of other ways of knowing and meaning making across disciplines such as sociology, psychology, anthropology, and education



resulting in a refocus on the body” (p. 121). Finally, Sodhi and Cohen (2012) addressed the growing area of adult education that is focusing on “noncognitive ways of knowing, such as intuitive knowing (Ruth-Sahd & Tisdell, 2007), unconscious knowing (Dirkx, 2001), and somatic knowing (Clark, 2001; Matthews, 1998; Michelson, 1998)” (p. 121) as ways of overcoming this dualism.

Dirkx (1997, 2006; Dirkx, Mezirow, & Cranton, 2006) has examined the realm of self through soul or inner work to address the mind and body dichotomy. Dirkx’s interests focus on a type of learning that “integrates our experiences of the outer world...with the experience of our inner worlds” (Dirkx, Mezirow, & Cranton, 2006, p. 126). He believes that by nurturing the soul, inner world, and inner self the continual search for meaning that exists just below the rational surface can be exposed (Dirkx, 1997). This approach recognizes a holistic understanding of the self through the spiritual, role of feelings, relationships, and other ways of knowing, including somatic and embodied (Dirkx, 1997; Taylor, 2008).

Of particular interest to this review are non-Western perspectives, that in themselves are other ways of knowing; ways of making meaning of our experiences that incorporate the mind and other contextual factors such as the body, spirit, soul, affect, and emotion. This section of the review pays specific attention to other ways of knowing that focus on the body and what Michelson (1998) calls a “re-membering” (Michelson, 1998) of the body into the meaning making process.

### **Other Ways of Knowing**

The research reviewed in this section covers topics of embodiment related to motor learning (Roessger, 2012); whole-person learning (Yorks & Kasl, 2002); wisdom (Bassett, 2003); sensory knowing (Bach, Kennedy, & Michelson, 1999), somatic learning (Amann, 2003;

Beaudoin, 1999; Brockman, 2001; Levine, 2007; Matthews, 1998; Sellers-Young, 1998), and embodied learning and embodiment (Freiler, 2008; Ghane & Sweeny, 2013; Sodhi & Cohen, 2012; Sommerville & Lloyd, 2006). After reviewing how embodiment and embodied learning have been conceptualized in the adult learning literature this review puts forth a conceptualization of embodiment that incorporates both fields of martial arts research and adult learning into a holistic model.

**Motor Learning.** Roessger (2012) noted a clear understanding of motor learning is absent from the field of adult education, even though mastering novel motor skills is an integral “component of most formal adult vocational and skills-based education” (Roessger, 2012, p. 371). This lack of understanding of how best to reach adult learners is further complicated by the embeddedness of learning activities in adult learning frameworks without knowing if the approach selected works (Roessger, 2012).

One of the approaches to adult learning reviewed by Roessger is experiential learning, a key component to many adult learning theories. Roessger’s stance on experience in relation to the motor learning is based on performance, or a “hands-on” approach to education (p. 377). Roessger (2012) drew upon principles established by Dewey (1938) and Kolb (1984), to arrive at four elements of experiential learning: (1) concrete experience, (2) reflective observation, (3) abstract conceptualization, and (4) active experiment. This process involves a progression through the steps resulting in learners actively creating and testing knowledge and using reflection to draw meaningful connections with experience (Roessger, 2012).

Roessger’s (2012) attention to the body and motor learning is admirable, but excludes the holistic interpretation needed for a somatic and embodied learning theory. Something more than

just the body in motion needs to be considered in order to establish motor learning as more holistic in nature.

**Whole-Person Learning.** Yorks and Kasl (2002) acknowledged that adult learning educators value the concept of affect, feelings and emotions, in developing theories but have issue reconciling it with multiple ways of knowing and whole-person learning (Yorks & Kasl, 2002). Their conception of a holistic theory of learning posits that an understanding of experience as a phenomenon that can be named and studied is paramount and that the role of affect is foundational in establishing the concept of “learning-within-relationship” (p. 177).

Yorks and Kasl (2002) credit Mezirow as the “catalyzing force” (Yorks & Kasl, 2002, p. 181) in adult education that treats experience as something to be reflected on and utilize Heron’s phenomenological perspective to present this other way of knowing through the knowledge about the phenomenon of experience. Yorks and Kasl (2002) speak from a pragmatist’s view of experience on multiple ways of knowing, where affective knowing is the object of reflection and emotional life is considered a part of experiential knowing where “experience is the state of being in felt encounter” (p. 184). Although Yorks and Kasl (2002) discussed the role of emotion and affect in the learning process, they fail to situate them expressly in conceptualization of the whole-person. They neglect the body, instead focusing on the felt encounter and reflection on the experience of the relationship with the other. Their conception of whole person learning does credit other ways of knowing as legitimate but falls short of somatic or embodied inclusion in the process of meaning making.

**Wisdom.** Bassett (2003) conceptualized wisdom similarly to how Yorks and Kasl (2002) position experience as a phenomenon to be studied. She created a model of wisdom that makes it tangible and easier to understand through a multifaceted approach. The components of

this approach include cognitive, affective, active, and reflective functions (Bassett, 2003).

Bassett posits wisdom as a dynamic “habit of mind...a way of thinking and understanding” (Bassett, 2003, p. 33). This concept of wisdom is concerned with the connectedness of everything and the application of intelligence to the human condition (Bassett, 2003).

In understanding and defining wisdom, Bassett’s (2003) research conceptualizes it as the interaction of discernment, empathy, engagement, and identity “for the betterment of the human condition” (p. 34). It is not enough for the pieces to work individually but they must also work in conjunction with “getting outside of ourselves and our own self-interest to see the larger picture and to determine the larger good” (p. 35). To this end, Bassett is concerned with defining wisdom and understanding how adult learning theories, such as transformative learning, helps the process of learning and teaching for wisdom (Bassett, 2003).

Bassett (2003) promotes it as a habit of mind that links transformative learning guidelines on the awareness of expanding consciousness (Bassett, 2003). Bassett integrated the cognitive oriented processes of transformative learning theory “critical reflection, discourse and reasoning, and use of disorienting dilemmas” (p. 36) into her model. This indicated that the interactions of the cognitive techniques play a vital “role in teaching for wisdom, as can ones that allow for the growth and maturation of the non-cognitive aspects of mind and spirit, such as esthetics, intuition, and the imagination” (p. 36). However, the body as a site for learning is almost consciously neglected. Calling for us to get outside of ourselves indicates a distinct separation of the body from the environment.

**Sensory Knowing.** Bach, Kennedy, and Michelson (1999) addressed the concept of sensory knowing through autobiographical narratives of their experiences. Their narratives dealt with: communication and relationships, giving voice and being silenced, seeing and knowing

(Bach, Kennedy, & Michelson, 1999). The senses are present in their stories, smells, sights, sounds, physical interactions, and tastes, applying their experience through narrative to the teacher education dialogue they hope to open the discourse to the embracing of “our working bodies” (p. 66). Bach et al. (1999) believed that understanding of our bodies and senses, and processes and connections, that we make meaning of our experiences and lives.

The attention that Bach et al. (1999) paid to the experience of our bodies, through the senses at our disposal, allow for a conceptualization of other ways of knowing that is inclusive of the cognitive and rational domains that many adult learning theories hold in high esteem as well as the body as a legitimate site of knowledge. Their view requires a holistic integration of mind and body through the experience of our senses. However, this view’s strengths are also its weaknesses. The treatment of the senses embodied by our being in the world only address one aspect of what it means to learn through and with the body, it does not necessarily leave space for the other ways of learning through the body such as affective or spiritual.

Focusing on other, non-cognitive or non-rational, ways of knowing addresses the growing dissatisfaction some researchers and theorists have expressed with the over reliance on rationality in some adult learning theories, especially transformative learning theory (Taylor, 1997). Aspects of learning and knowing commonly referred to as somatic or embodied gives us a framework and language to use in order to explore other ways of knowing that validate more than just the rational mind as the seat of knowledge and meaning making. This framework, to be effective, needs a definition of terms. This need for a definition springs forth from the indiscriminate use by many authors to explain other ways of knowing such as sensory, motor, affective, spiritual, kinesthetic, tactile, whole-person, and holistic, to name a few (Amann, 2003; Clark, 2001; Kerka, 2002). In keeping with the conceptualization of other ways of knowing

through the body the terms somatic and embodied have been selected for this study to encompass the definition that follows.

**Somatic Learning.** The definition of somatic learning has been explored by Amann (2003) who defined it as “meaning making...created by the body through movement (Amann, 2003, p. 5). Other scholars dedicated to somatic learning and its interaction with other adult learning theories are presented. However, more attention will be directed towards Amann’s conceptualization of somatic.

Matthews (1998) included kinesthetic knowing in his definition of somatic knowing. This definition involves experiential knowing that incorporates, sense, perception, and the inclusion of body and mind; “a knowing, feeling, and acting that includes more of the broad range of human experience than that delimited within the traditionally privileged” (Matthews, 1998, p. 236-237) ways of knowing. Matthews (1998) believed that a somatic education that utilizes this framework is likely to produce student transformation and that this transformation is the “goal of all education” (p. 37).

Beaudoin (1999) conducted research on individuals that examined the integration of body movement techniques into their everyday lives. These techniques were designed to help “develop greater awareness of their body in movement...[and] aim to increase body awareness in order to allow individuals to act with efficiency, pleasure, increased expression and less pain” (Beaudoin, 1999, p. 76). Through interview data she found that individuals progressed through different stages of learning these somatic practices: exposure, participation, identification, internalization, and dissemination. Reaching a higher stage of understanding of the techniques allowed for a transformation through the integration of “the original somatic learning into their

ways of doing things” (p. 79). All of the participants in Beaudoin’s (1999) study “developed a different attitude toward themselves and their everyday problems” (p. 79).

Brockman (2001) proposed “somatic dimensions of knowing” (Brockman, 2001, p. 329), arguing for a somatic epistemology to address teaching values in education as well as conflict resolution. This conceptualization of somatic knowing addresses knowledge that is known by the body, relying on physical sensations and kinesthetic knowing as mentioned previously. Brockman (2001) viewed the knowledge produced in this model as received from within the being, as opposed to cultural knowledge which is “received from without” (p. 331). One potential limitation of this conceptualization of somatic knowledge is that it incorporates the somatic dimension in the meaning making process based on the fact that the brain is located within the body.

Levine (2007) situated the body within aspects of social conflict. To accomplish this situation, he recognizes theories that address the body as “the seat of a number of powers of its own” (Levine, 2007, p. 39) in contrast to the Cartesian mind/body split. Levine mentioned the kinesthetic perceptual abilities and movement skills of the field of Somatics as the primary proponents of this concept. He incorporates the works of Feldenkrais to drive the point further, that “the most abstract thought has emotional-vegetative and sensory-motor components; the whole nervous system participates in every act” (Feldenkrais as cited in Levine, 2007, p. 39). This research reinforces Brockman’s (2001) conceptualization, that at its roots all knowing and learning can be considered somatic if for no other reason than the body is involved.

Sellers-Young (1998) addressed the somatic processes through her teaching and practice of dance. Drawing attention to the body as a site of investigation she discusses links between Western and Eastern perceptions of movement. She incorporated movement philosophies of

Western practitioners that developed from Eastern philosophies as well as Eastern and non-Western approaches and concepts that do not draw a distinction between the mind and body in the learning process. This incorporation includes Japanese concepts of not only the body but of Yuasa's conceptualization of Ki—energy, and Japanese and African methods of dance.

The most comprehensive conceptualization of somatic learning in the adult learning and continuing education field comes from Amann (2003). Amann (2003) conceptualized the movement of the body as requiring four distinct contextual interactions to be involved in the meaning making process: kinesthetic learning, sensory learning, affective learning, and spiritual learning. Amann (2003) conceptualized kinesthetic learning “as a result of the concerted movements of muscles, tendons, and joints” (Amann, 2003, p. 3). The acts of walking, running, jumping, or throwing illustrates the mode of kinesthetic learning that comprises Amann's definition of somatic learning.

The second contextual interaction of the body Amann recognized is sensory learning. Sensory learning utilizes our five senses for the construction of knowledge in the meaning making process (Amann, 2003). The five senses of sight, smell, hearing, taste, and touch, work in conjunction to define how our bodies make meaning through a somatic lens. This aspect highlights a different aspect of how we interact with the environment.

Affective learning is the third interactional factor believed to be “the acquisition of knowledge as a result of paying attention to and honoring our feelings and emotions” (p. 4). The colloquial expression of a “gut feeling” may be the simplest way to understand this type of learning. Affective learning encompasses the concept of self-awareness which requires the recognition of the impact of emotions on our lives (Amann, 2003) which can lead to potential reflection in the moment rather than on the moment.



Finally, spiritual learning integrates the three other concepts into a holistic model for learning. Amann (2003) believed that spiritual learning is “about making meaning of our lives” (p. 4) through the construction of knowledge carried out through symbolic gestures such as art, music, rituals, and movements that have particular meanings (Amann, 2003).

Amann’s (2003) model “posits that meaning making is created by the body through movement” (p. 5) within each of the learning types. This model of somatic ways of knowing impacts adult learning theories by offering a different type of learning experience that engages the whole person in the learning process. This can lead to “a more complete, sometimes transformational, learning experience” (p. 6) incorporating felt body and emotions into critical reflection and thinking.

Somatic learning has dealt with the experiences that are learned through our physical bodies and how those experiences become incorporated into our being. The movement of the body in relation to itself, others, and context define somatic experiences that become a part of who we are. However, the body does not act alone in the meaning making enterprise, the mind and other realities are equally involved, whether we are aware of them or not. A move away from only focusing on the body is needed, embodiment is the answer.

**Embodied learning/Embodiment.** The second term to tackle is embodied learning, also called embodied knowing or embodiment. Ghane and Sweeny (2013) addressed the term of embodiment, for the field of health psychology, as a catchall for the theories and studies that are informed by the “basic principles of embodied cognition” (Ghane & Sweeny, 2013), p. 161). These principles hold that people “perceive their environment in terms of how they can physically interact and perform actions to manipulate objects that surround them” (Gibson & Walker, 1984 as cited in Ghane & Sweeny, 2013, p. 161). Thus, embodiment incorporates the

behaviors of the mind and body through cognition, affect, and behavior as they interact with the environment.

Somerville and Lloyd (2006) examined stories of embodied learning, specifically examining how workers are trained and how they learn to work safely in workplace learning environments. They believed that the limited research in workplace education that focuses on the body and spatiality is due to the “devaluing of anything associated with the body compared to the mind” (Somerville & Lloyd, 2006, p. 280). Their findings place the body as central to the participant’s experiences of learning work place safety. It is not enough to have conceptual knowledge but the “ability to locate the body in place and practice, to recognize the body as a site of subjective/intersubjective knowledge and a source of learning for others” (p. 288) is necessary. This type of learning is not superficial and requires the incorporation of shared subjectivities with the others that the worker interacts with (Somerville & Lloyd, 2006). Examples from the research are stories from firefighters learning alongside other firefighters, not just learning based on the memorization of facts. This learning was with the body through observations of other firefighters, sensory learning through their interactions with fires, and learning in concert with others to ensure the safety of everyone (Somerville & Lloyd, 2006).

Sodhi and Cohen (2012) examined the link between embodied knowing in the field of adult learning and social work. They cite work by Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) that set the “precedence in the importance of valuing and giving permission to learn from nontraditional sources” (Sodhi & Cohen, 2012, p. 122). In their review the body is situated as the locus of learning and a site for experiential learning. Through their descriptions, the definition they utilize incorporates the conceptualization of somatic and bodily knowing using the terms interchangeably (Sodhi & Cohen, 2012). They believe that embodied knowing is

knowledge within the body as well as that gained through the interaction of the body's senses and actions that bring into the relationship of mind and body thought, emotion, and behavior, "it is impossible not to think, feel and act" (p. 122).

Freiler (2008) addresses the distinction between somatic and embodied learning and knowing by stating that they "are all closely aligned and used interchangeably" (Freiler, 2008, p. 39). A common thread that ties somatic and embodied learning together comes from Freiler's (2008) review of Beaudoin, (1999), Brockman, (2001), and Clark, (2001) in which embodied learning and somatic learning "are associated with an evolving awareness of bodily experiences as a source of constructing knowledge through engaged, lived body experiences of physicality, sensing, and being in both body and world" (Freiler, 2008, p. 39).

Freiler (2008) makes the distinction that "somatic learning generally refers to learning directly experienced through bodily awareness and sensation during purposive body-centered movements" (p. 39) whereas "embodiment and embodied learning generally refer to a broader, more holistic view of constructing knowledge that engaged the body as a site of learning, usually in connection with other domains of knowing (for example, spiritual, affective, symbolic, cultural, rational)" (p. 39). Instead of trying to incorporate different types of learning as Amann (2003) did, Freiler (2008) made clear distinctions between the types of learning through the body that somatic learning is focused on and the broader focus of the body as a site of learning that embodied learning focuses on.

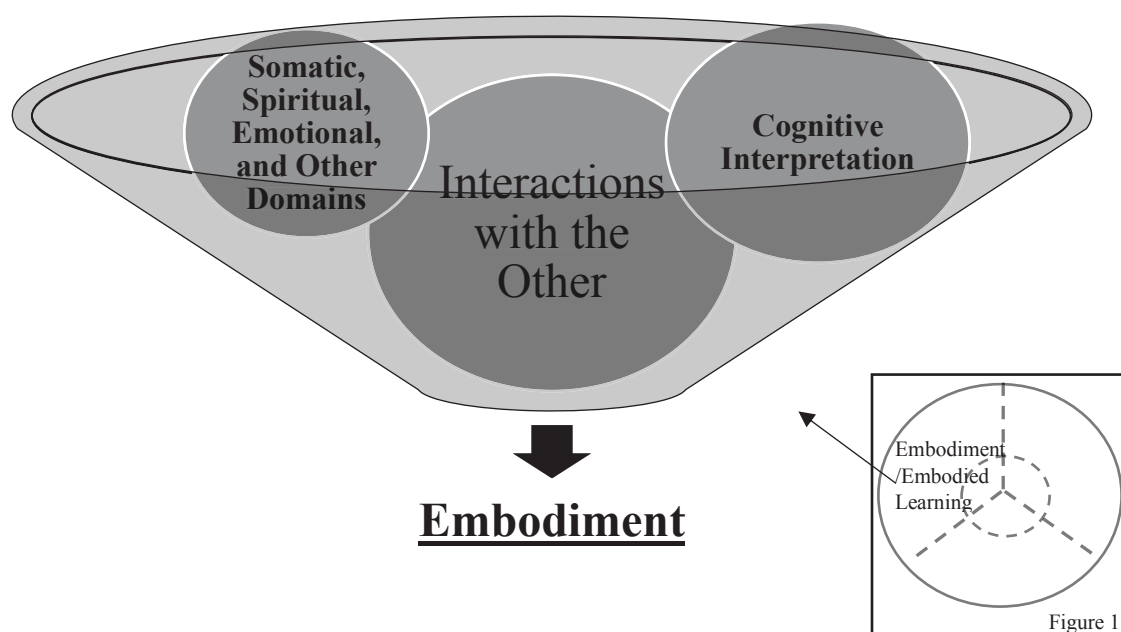
Freiler (2008) views embodiment as a way to conceptualize the construction of knowledge "by incorporating unity of mind and body in the process of knowing through both objective and subjective realms of knowledge construction" (p. 40). These two realms, objective and subjective, represent rational external knowledge construction and internal, "personal ways"

of knowledge construction respectively (Freiler, 2008). Important to both Amann's (2003) somatic learning model and Freiler's (2008) embodied learning concept is a unity of both mind and body, not a separation. Their models and concepts place neither above the other but instead require a reintegration or as Michelson puts it a "re-membering" (Michelson, 1998) of both in order to create a more holistic learning experience.

### **Conceptualizing Embodiment**

The preceding review is not exhaustive of the numerous possible directions and research conducted on other ways of knowing, especially those that utilize the body as a site of learning that challenges the dominant and often times taken for granted value placed on cognitive and rational aspects of knowing and learning. However, enough foundational literature has been reviewed in order to begin conceptualizing the term in order to define key components. Instead of a separation of the terms somatic and embodied/embodiment, or worse yet an interchangeability, each will hold clear meanings and definitions within the model, presented in Figure 2. The definitions and meanings will simultaneously support each other and the whole construct through mutual collaboration and reciprocal action.

This model proposes the terms embodiment and embodied learning as a re-membering (Michelson, 1998) of the body into the meaning making process. These terms include the physical, kinesthetic, and somatic concepts and definitions discussed earlier, as well as the felt, affective, emotional, and other domains of knowing that are experienced through and within the body. These other domains of knowing are encompassed in this model of embodiment in both the individual, societal, and temporal contexts. This model of embodiment also emphasizes the interactions that we have with the other, primarily concerned with how those interactions directly affect how we come to make meaning of our experiences. The model of embodiment,

Figure 2 *Embodiment*

represented in Figure 2 relies on a holistic understanding of the whole person situated within their contexts, not just fragments.

This literature review has illustrated that both somatic and embodied learning and knowing can be studied separately. However, when both concepts are integrated into a holistic model the potential for situating the body as a legitimate component in the meaning making process may be fully realized. This “re-members” (Michelson, 1998) the body and the mind into a whole unit without tipping the scale in either direction, an equilibrium is reached that may speak to a deeper understanding of the human condition.

Human beings experience the world in vast and unfathomable ways, some of which are not recognizable until after they have occurred. This study proposes the martial arts as the vehicle to conceptualize and understand these other ways of knowing as a model of embodiment and embodied learning and knowing. Matthews claims that embodied experiences and somatic

knowing are at the heart of the arts and applied culture and is at least as central to daily competence as the analytically discursive, distanced knowing that traditional schools cultivate” (Matthews, 1998, p. 237).

Kleinman (2005) viewed the Western nature for “placing things into boxes, drawing lines, and create[ing] barriers” (Kleinman, 2005, p. 257) as a compulsion and perception of the nature of Western education, especially in regard to physical education and kinesiology. Kleinman believed that this separation has led to an “unnatural state” (p. 257) in which these distinctions of separation are reinforced. He explored notions of “wholeness” (p. 258) as natural states and urges educators to adopt “a stance toward teaching and learning, which dissolves boundaries, sees things in terms of relationships, celebrates dilemmas, recognizes the fluidity rather than the rigidity of ‘place,’ and above all, *doing* something about it” (p. 60). Kleinman’s conception of life was that “word and action, speech and gesture, merge into one, become one (Kleinman, 2000, p. 99). He envisioned a somatic and movement education that incorporated “all of the appropriate subject matter of the sciences, arts, and humanities” (p. 99) and blended them in with and through the body, mind, and spirit. This vision is something that I believe this study can support by exploring the martial arts and addressing the two gaps in both martial arts research literature and adult learning research.

### **Self-Directed Learning and Collaborative Learning**

Two additional areas of adult learning research contribute to the literature review for this study. Self-directed learning (SDL) and collaborative learning add to transformative learning theory in addressing how the adult learners make meaning of their experiences.

## Self-Directed Learning

Self-directed learning is a broad and diverse area of study within the field of adult learning. Two models that have been validated for framing SDL are focused on for this literature review, the “Personal Responsibility Orientation” (PRO) model (Brockett & Hiemstra, 1991), and the updated version of this model the “Person, Process, Context” (PPC) model (Hiemstra & Brockett, 2012). The PRO model is based on three ideas based on a humanistic philosophy: “[T]hat human nature is basically good,...that individuals possess virtually unlimited potential for growth...[and] that only by accepting responsibility for one’s own learning is it possible to take a proactive approach to the learning process” (Brockett & Hiemstra, 1991, p. 26-27). The PRO model was Brockett and Hiemstra’s (1991) initial “attempt to synthesize and organize several key ideas that existed in the SDL literature at that time” (Hiemstra & Brockett, 2012, p. 156). The PRO model views self-direction as both a learner characteristic and a process of learning. However, the model begins from the personal responsibility that an individual must embody in order to begin their journey. The model is also surrounded by an oval to illustrate that learning does not take place “in a vacuum; rather it takes place within a larger social context that influences both the learner and the teaching-learning process” (Hiemstra & Brockett, 2012, p. 156). The PRO model is presented in Figure 3.

The PPC model was Hiemstra and Brockett’s (2012) reconfiguration and update to the PRO model. They incorporated developments in self-directed learning (SDL) that have occurred since the PRO model was first introduced to develop the PPC model. The PPC model places the focus of SDL at the center of three interlocking rings. Each ring is evenly sized and weighted representing three dimensions of SDL: (a) person, (b) process, and (c) context. It is the balance

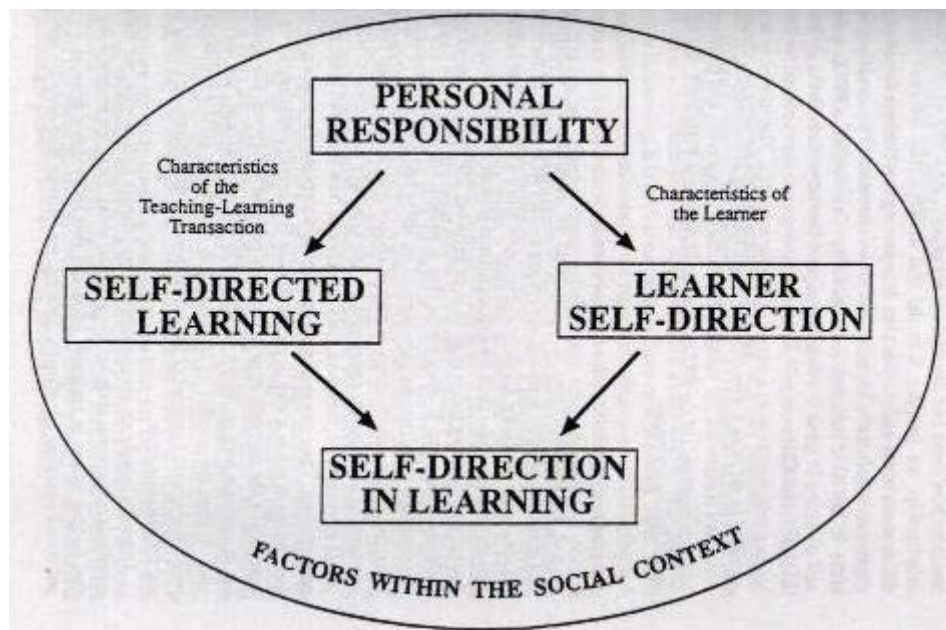


Figure 3 *PRO Model of SDL* (Brockett & Hiemstra, 1991, p. 25) reproduced with permission from the authors

of these three situations that leads to the most optimal environment for SDL to occur. Hiemstra and Brockett (2012) recognize that there may be some situations that favor one concept over the others, but addresses a contested aspect of SDL that focused too much attention on the “individual learner without considering the impact of the sociopolitical context in which such learning takes place” (p. 159). The PPC model highlights the ways in which person, process, and context interact in learning endeavors is fluid and ever changing from situation to situation, but there is always a greater sociopolitical context that the learning experience is grounded.

### **Collaborative Learning**

Collaborative learning within the context of the field of adult learning is best illustrated through the work of Peters and Armstrong (1998). Their work identifies three types of teaching and learning: (a) Type One or “teaching by transmission, learning by reception” (Peters & Armstrong, 1998, p. 78); (b) Type Two or “teaching by transmission, learning by sharing” (p.



79); and (c) Type Three or “collaborative learning experience” (p. 79). Each type of teaching and learning is identified by the relationship that exist between the teacher and learner. This typology is not meant to encompass every possible teaching and learning setting or every possible environment in which learning takes place (Peters & Armstrong, 1998). Instead the types are offered as a guide to facilitate a collaborative type of teaching and learning; focused on the creation of knowledge and the experience of the interaction with and through the other (1998).

### **Two Gaps**

This study was designed to explore the embodied experiences of adult learners who practice the martial arts, because the adult learner’s experience is under represented in the body of martial arts research. The majority of the martial arts research is conducted with youth outcomes in mind (e.g., Rogowska & Kuśnierz, 2013; Lakes & Hoyt, 2004; Vertonghen & Theeboom, 2012). When the experience of the adult learner is considered in the research literature, it is typically viewed through a narrow lens such as therapy (Rosenberg & Sapochnik, 2005) or teaching contexts (Theeboom, De Knop, & Wylleman, 2008; Vertonghen, Theeboom, & Cloes, 2012; Noy, 2015). When the lens is allowed to focus on the broader experience of the adult learner in a martial arts context the experience re-told by the researcher(s) is often times predetermined by the research question, such as gender (White & Miller-Lane, 2011), masculinity (Channon, 2012), mixed-sex inclusivity (Channon, 2013), and cultural identity (Siapno, 2012). A focus on just the experience itself is missing from the literature and this study was designed to address this gap.

The second gap in the martial arts research literature this study was designed to address is the experience of the advanced martial arts student. Martial arts research literature can

potentially be situated on a spectrum with one end representing research that addresses the experience of the beginning student (e.g., Aindow, 2013; Fontaine, 2002). While at the other end of the spectrum are the re-told experiences of the sensei or teacher (Noy, 2015; Theeboom, De Knop, & Wylleman, 2008; Vertonghen, Theeboom, & Cloes, 2012). The experiences of advanced martial artists, those in between the two poles, are often relegated to survey results (Ding, Chen, Zou, & Tian, 2015; Draxler, Ostermnan, & Honekamp, 2011; Ko, Kim, & Valacich, 2010) or considered from a particular lens (Channon, 2012; Channon, 2013; Siapno, 2012; White & Miller-Lane, 2011).

The martial arts and the field of study that has sprung up around it over the past three decades addresses Kleinman's pedagogical aims for Movement Arts or a Somatic Education. Through this literature review, the practice of the martial arts has been established as an embodied way of knowing and of life (i.e., a *habitus*) which has become synonymous with art and how we create our world by being and interacting with it. By moving and being in the world as a whole person our bodies and minds are co-creating the meaning derived from our experiences, rather than dividing the endeavor. The research on the martial arts proposes the similar goal which aligns with Kleinman's goal of living "our lives as good artists, both as theorists and practitioners" (Kleinman, 2000, p. 98).

### **Summary**

The field of martial arts research potentially challenges the dominant social structure in Western society, positing the experiences learned through the body (not just about the body) as equally important to the experiences reflected through the mind. Kleinman (2005) summarized this shared responsibility for meaning making as "wholeness" (Kleinman, 2005, p. 258). This

concept requires us to be aware of the imposition of categories of “appropriate states of being” (p. 258) that separate ourselves from ourselves, removing ourselves from being “whole”.

Kleinman’s (2000) pedagogical approach to the “Movement Arts or Somatic Education” (Kleinman, 2000, p. 98) was based on holistic principles that intertwine life and art. Kleinman proposed a set of principles that would guide what he termed kinesthetic phenomenology:

- Life is a state of continuous creation and moving is a universal manifestation of this creativity.
- Thus, every act, every gesture, every thought contains all the elements we look for, and recognize in a “work of art.”
- Every behavior, gesture and thought, therefore, may be viewed as being “artful.” These are, literally, creative acts.
- Therefore, we function as artists at every moment.
- Life and art become synonymous. Living becomes an artistic enterprise.
- It becomes incumbent upon education particularly, somatic education, to provide opportunities to create good art, to help us live our lives as good artists, both as theorists and practitioners. (Somatics: Movement for the New Age, 1992, as cited in Kleinman, 2000, p. 98)

Viewed through this proposed model of embodiment, the martial arts could be established as an embodied way of life, a habitus, and become synonymous with Art and how we create our world by being and interacting with it. By moving and being in the world as a whole person our bodies and minds are co-creating and integrating the meaning derived from our experiences, rather than dividing the endeavor.

### **CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this narrative study was to explore adult learners' lived experiences of learning and practicing martial arts in the southeastern United States of America. The two research questions that guided this study were: (a) What experience(s) led the adult learner to the martial arts? and (b) What is the adult learner's experience(s) of learning and practicing the martial arts? Chapter Three discusses the qualitative methodology and methods employed throughout this study. This chapter addresses why and how a qualitative approach was the most appropriate avenue to explore the research questions. Chapter Three explains the rationale for selecting adult learners and further clarifies criteria used for participant selection, site description, interview protocol, data collection, data analysis, and how trustworthiness was promoted throughout the study. Chapter Three also frames how I as the researcher became part of the study.

#### **Paradigmatic/Conceptual Framing**

“Methodology is inevitably interwoven with and emerges from the nature of particular disciplines...and particular perspectives” (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011, p. 97). These disciplines and perspectives are what Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba report as paradigms. The paradigm selected for a study is important because certain epistemological and ontological assumptions accompany any paradigm (for further information refer to Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). These assumptions guide all aspects of the study: questions about what is “capital T-truth” and how do we come to know it, how do researchers interact with and come to data, what methods best answer the research questions, and how do researchers re-present the data to an audience. This study utilized a “loosely defined” (p. 116) social constructivist paradigm to frame it and comprises a central part of the conceptual framework proposed in Chapter One.

## **Social Constructivism**

The constructivist paradigm is not a single unified paradigm, but a conglomeration of related ontological and epistemological perspectives that share an underlying commonality. This commonality hinges on the subjective nature of reality and that knowledge is how we make meaning out of our experiences (Merriam & Brockett, 2007). The brand of constructivism selected to guide this study was social constructivism. In-depth analysis of social constructivism is beyond the scope of this study. However, a conceptualization of this particular paradigm is necessary to plot the remainder of Chapter Three and illustrate how social constructivism framed the study.

Researchers have examined the martial arts through different sociological lenses. Brown and Johnson (2000) utilized the concepts of habitus taken from Pierre Bourdieu's "post-structuralist theory of practice" (p. 247). Crossley (2007) reviews sociological conceptualizations of the body through phenomenological writers, and Marcel Mauss' concept of "body techniques" (p. 80). And Silva (2002) addresses embodiment and dualism through the introduction of Yuasa and Ichikawa, two Japanese thinkers whose concepts meld and expand current ways of thinking about the sociology of the body. In order to establish a firm base to build this study's paradigmatic approach from, a re-tracing of the origins of the social constructivist paradigm is necessary. Berger and Luckmann (1966) and Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2011) were selected as the foundational research to support the social constructivist paradigm within the embodied narrative knowing theoretical framework.

**Berger and Luckmann.** The conceptualization of social constructivism that guided this study relied primarily on the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966), particularly how their interpretations of their social construction of reality have been used by social scientists such as

Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2011). As the researcher, I understand that there are other interpretations that both utilize and do not utilize Berger and Luckmann (1966) as a foundation for social constructivism. However, my ontological and epistemological values most closely align with those of researchers and theorists who integrate Berger and Luckmann's (1966) concepts into a social constructivist paradigm. In order to provide a ground for my conceptualization of social constructivism a brief overview of Berger and Luckmann's conceptualization of the social construction of reality is required.

Berger and Luckmann (1966) are sociologists who closely align with a sociological school of thought known as "sociology of knowledge". This sociological tradition draws heavily from sociologist such as Marx, Nietzsche, Shuler, Manheim, Durkheim, and Weber, to name but a few. Berger and Luckmann (1966) believe that "the sociology of knowledge, therefore, must concern itself with the social construction of reality" (p. 14). Their process recognized a Marxian conception that "man's consciousness is determined by his social being" (p. 5), and that human thought is founded in human activity (agency and action) and in the social relations brought about by this activity. This foundation illustrates that there is a relationship between human thought and underlying reality(s) that are manifested in other ways than simple cognition.

Berger and Luckmann (1966) also integrated historicism into their process, to give an "overwhelming sense of the relativity of all perspectives on human events, that is, of the inevitable historicity of human thought" (p. 6). Simply put, all situations (e.g., experiences) can only be understood in their own terms or socio-historical contexts. This leads Berger and Luckmann (1966) to state that "society determines the presence...but not the nature...of ideas" (p. 7); which parallels work by Karl Manheim, that human thought is not immune to the influences of society and "knowledge must always be knowledge from a certain position" (p. 9).

Berger and Luckmann (1966) incorporated sociological perspectives from Schutz (1962) who is “concentrated on the structure of the commonsense world of everyday life” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 14). They also draw inspiration from Durkheim and Weber to define everyday life as that which “presents itself as a reality interpreted by men and subjectively meaningful to them as a coherent world...It is a world that originates in their thoughts and actions, and is maintained as real by these” (p. 20). Berger and Luckmann (1966) go on to define social construction as a “systematic theoretical reasoning” (p. 12) or an “adequate understanding of the ‘reality *sui generis*’ of society [which] requires an inquiry into the manner in which this reality is constructed” (p. 16).

The social constructivist paradigm as laid out by Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2011) draws much of its inspiration from the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966) and this conceptualization closely aligns with my epistemological and ontological beliefs. In a similar vein to Berger and Luckman (1966), Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2011) do not believe that “reality” is an absolute. They posit that what is real or true for one individual may not be the exact same for a different individual, or the same individual given the dynamism of temporality and socio-historical contexts (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). From the social constructivist paradigm, we come to know what is real through our shared interaction with the environment and the others who share that environment with us, at different moments in our time. Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2011) believe that “a goodly portion of social phenomena consists of the meaning-making activities of groups and individuals around those phenomena...it is the meaning-making, sense-making, attributional activities that shape action (or inaction)” (Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba, 2011, p. 116).

The focus on language within social relationships is a crucial component in a social constructivist paradigm and is part of the embodied narrative knowing theoretical framework (described in Chapter One) that guided this study. Within this theoretical framework, the individual is a holistic unit which incorporates the body and mind into the meaning making processes (Brown & Johnson, 2000; De Crée, 2013; Martínková & Parry, 2015; Sato, 2011). The use of language in social interactions and contexts as the vehicle for understanding and developing our identities in relation to others is vital to a social constructivist paradigm. The embodied narrative knowing theoretical framework highlights this focus on language through the inclusion of narrative knowing as another paradigm for support.

Narrative knowing is the meaning making that occurs through the co-constructed nature of narratives and the interaction with others in our temporal and socio-historical contexts (Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2012; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Polkinghorne, 1995; Riessman, 2008). The co-construction of narratives allows everyone to wear their stories, live their stories, and use their stories to make meaning of their experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Kramp, 2004; Polkinghorne, 1995). This narrative knowing, which is socially negotiated, is also how we present ourselves to the environment and those that inhabit it, and how we are in turn affected by their experience, social influences, and interaction with our narratives. The specific methodology and research method chosen for exploring these experiences from a social constructivist paradigm, which was a part of this studies embodied narrative knowing theoretical framework, is narrative inquiry.

### **Theoretical Framing: Narrative Inquiry**

Narrative inquiry has become an increasingly popular methodology of qualitative research and is acknowledged by a growing number of scholars in many diverse fields such as



psychology, literature, anthropology, sociology, history, and education (Creswell, 2013; Roberts & Shenhav, 2014). This study utilized narrative inquiry in two primary forms, as theory and as method.

### **Narrative Inquiry as Theory**

As theory, Polkinghorne (1995) tells us that, “[N]arrative inquiry refers to a subset of qualitative research designs in which stories are used to describe human action” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 5). The terminology and meanings of narrative are diverse, and vary from one research project to another (Spector-Mersel, 2010). A unique language emerges that narrative researchers rely on but do not always agree upon (Spector-Mersel, 2010). This unique language comes with baggage that must be addressed before moving further. Two concepts that make up that baggage are: (1) the interchangeable use of the terms story and narrative, and (2) the co-constructed nature of narratives.

**Story.** One of the unique elements of narrative inquiry rests in the use of participant’s narratives or stories (Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2012; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Polkinghorne, 1995; Riessman, 2008). Narrative inquiry “is the understanding that narrative is a way of knowing” (Kramp, 2004, p. 106) and that this *knowing* is expressed in stories. According to Kramp (2004) “each story has a plot...reflects the perspective of the narrator...has a setting in time and place...has a beginning, middle, and ending, although not necessarily presented in that order as it is told” (Kramp, 2004, p. 109). Bruner (1996) states that, at minimum, a story has a character who acts to achieve a goal (plot) in a context by use of certain means.

Polkinghorne (1995) uses the term *story* to “signify narratives that combine a succession of incidents into a unified episode” (p. 7). Drawing primarily upon the linguistic research of Bruner (1985, 1990), Ricoeur (1984, 1991, 1992), and others, Polkinghorne (1995) established

his definition of story, in which *plot* plays an integral part. Plot arranges the story into a narrative structure that: sets a temporal range; criteria for selecting events to be included; temporally ordering the events; and making meaning of the events in relation to the story as a unified whole.

Stories have meaning, a point, and are told for a reason (Mishler, 1995; Wilensky, 1983). Stories “told and read to us and...by us” (Kramp, 2004, p. 109) are often how we come to experience narratives. These stories told to us and retold by us as narrative inquirers can challenge our own and others assumptions as well as taken for granted forms of inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). As narrative inquirers, we become a part of the story told to us, with us, and through us. We are inextricably linked to the teller through the act of listening and re-telling, or re-presenting the story for another audience (Mishler, 1995). In this study, I inhabited a role as researcher, but also as a fellow martial artist. Listening and engaging in another martial artist’s story shed light on my own journey as a martial artist. This allowed me to establish a commonality with the participant that provided a basis for the co-construction of our narratives.

Another conceptualization of story comes from work done by Clandinin and Connelly (2000). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) conceptualized stories as being within a “three-dimensional space”, which includes “*personal* and *social* (interaction); *past*, *present*, and *future* (continuity); combined with the notion of *place* (situation)” (p. 50). Their framework situates stories in time, paying attention to how this temporality affects the telling and retelling of the story. The three-dimensional space also brings in the personal and social dimensions of stories and situates the story, and telling of the story, within specific places or sequences. Clandinin and

Connelly's (2000) "three-dimensional space" share similarities with Polkinghorne's (1995) use of plot, specifically how it purposefully arranges and structures the story into a narrative format.

**Co-construction.** A story is co-constructed because there is a teller and a listener, each participant is engaged in a collaborative activity which they share a mutual commitment of engagement (Hydén, 2012). Stories carry weight, are often purposeful, and convey meaning through the interaction of the teller and audience, or the co-constructed tellings and re-tellings (Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2012; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 2008). "Narrative inquiry assumes 'personal involvement' as the very condition that makes it possible for you, as researcher to gather and interpret narratives" (Kramp, 2004, p. 114). Qualitative research requires the researcher to act as the instrument for data collection making personal involvement as a narrative inquirer inescapable (Merriam, 1995). Instead of "dispassionately chronicling experience and events" (Kramp, 2004, p. 114), the co-construction of narratives brings me into the relationship of the story that is being co-constructed with the participant as an "insider" (i.e., martial artist) and "outsider" (i.e., researcher).

By co-constructing the narrative with the participant, I am able to engage more fully with our stories and experiences as they merge into the telling and re-telling. This engagement is more than verbal confirmation of hearing and listening. It extends to the embodied interactions inherent in a collaborative activity, reacting to body language and subtle signs in body position or posture. These non-verbal cues and the reactions that they engender on both of the participants allows for a more engaged telling to an interested party, who is also invested in their story.

## **Methods**

Narrative inquiry allowed for my multiple identities to become a component of the story being co-constructed. These identities included me as researcher, listener, teller, and martial artist. Narrative inquiry allowed my experience as a martial artist to become a part of the tapestry being woven through the inclusion of my bracketing interview as well as participating as a co-constructor of the participant's story. I am unable to completely separate myself as a martial artist and researcher. I view the martial arts as a way of life (Overton, 2014). Therefore, my listening is inherently more engaged due to a commonality that was shared between the participant and I; a link that goes beyond surface traits, into a shared experience, that of practicing the martial arts.

Together we co-constructed the narrative so as not to overlook any insights produced from the relationship. This immersion in the story allowed me to be present in the relationship with the participant and the story that we are co-constructing. Even though we shared a deeper connection than merely researcher and participant, I attempted to remain present in the relationship as researcher by utilizing a dialogic process (elaborated later in Chapter Three) which allowed for extended periods of talk by the participant. I did not completely remove myself from the relationship, but I remained focused on the participant's narrative of their experience. In this section I will discuss narrative inquiry as method. This includes the use of field texts, bracketing interviews, and interviewing techniques that are unique to narrative inquiry.

### **Narrative Inquiry as Method**

Narrative inquiry as method is situated to explore stories that are "natural to us" (Kramp, 2004, p. 106). Stories frame events and experiences of being in the world, which produce a rich

tapestry of data for narrative inquirers (Beuthin, 2014; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). In order to explore the story that I am co-constructing with the participant I implemented narrative inquiry methods in the interview process, analysis phase, and areas concerning issues of trustworthiness.

**Field Texts.** In narrative inquiry “field texts are our way of talking about what passes for data...because data tend to carry with them the idea of objective representation of research experience” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 93). However, the field texts that we select for the study are always in the process of being interpreted by us. Since we are the instruments for data collection our interpretations and bias influence what we attend to, how we enter the field, the relationship with our participants, and “also say much about what is not said and not noticed” (p. 93). Narrative inquiry requires us as researchers to immerse ourselves in the data as the instrument for its collection, therefore, we are never fully able to attend to every detail within the research experience (Clandinin, & Connelly, 2000).

Some researchers who study the martial arts promote immersion in the practice to be studied, gaining an insider perspective can be the only way to fully understand the practice. Siapno (2012) examined the dance traditions and martial arts training in Timor Leste. These traditions were studied in relation to how bodily movement might be considered “care-of-the-self...and artistic expressions, which might enable people to recover from...years of accumulated trauma and violence from colonial domination” (Siapno, 2012, p. 428). The field texts that Siapno (2012) utilized includes, recorded interviews, film footage, photography, and “most importantly, dance and aikido lessons” (p. 429). The inclusion of many different data points as field texts allows researchers to fill in the gaps in order to paint a more holistic story. The field texts used in this study were a bracketing interview, research journal, and narrative interviews.

**Bracketing.** In qualitative research the epistemological and ontological assumptions of the researcher are always in question (i.e., how do we know what we know and how do we come to know what we know, or what is T/truth and knowledge and how do we understand this to be so) (J. Peters, personal communication, November 2015). In order to address these questions about the researcher's assumptions and experiences, the researcher's bias must be "made explicit and understood" (Rolls & Relf, 2006, p. 288). The researcher's positionality is "increasingly seen to be part of the methodological discussion" (Roberts, 2002, p. 87) and must be addressed in qualitative research. There is a research tradition of immersing yourself in the practice of the martial art you are studying. Siapno (2012) and Delamont (2013) examine their respective martial art practices through not only being immersed in the experience of practicing but also through their identities as researchers. They are unable to remove themselves from their practice or study, instead opting for inclusion as researcher and participant. This inclusive trend is supported by embodied research and methodologies which have been explored in the previous chapters. Instead of removing oneself from the study, the inclusion of all possible selves of the researcher brings to light their own positionalities for themselves as well as their audience.

By clearly stating my positionality as the researcher and laying bare the bias and assumptions that I bring to the relationship with the participant I am making my positionality transparent. This transparency allows my "assumptions, values, thoughts, feelings, experiences, and, especially unconscious agenda(s)" (Rolls & Relf, 2006, p. 289) to stand up and be counted. My assumptions as researcher, martial artist, and human being were bracketed following two paths, a bracketing interview and a research journal.

Rolls and Relf (2006) described a bracketing interview process that "provides an opportunity for reflection and exploration" (p. 292) based on the need for continued research

support for the primary researcher. Their process is guided by the framework of hermeneutic phenomenology and the understanding of the subjective experience. Rolls and Relf (2006) believed that “this ability to bracket is more a question of how reflexive we are, rather than how objective” (p. 290). Their notion of reflexivity is founded on concepts from Hammersley and Atkinson (1995), which implicate the socio-historical locations and temporal values and interests of those locations in determining the orientations of the researchers.

The bracketing interview exposes the personal biases and assumptions of the researcher in relationship to the research questions and study as a whole (Rolls & Relf, 2006). The bracketing interview was treated as a form of data collection and was taped and transcribed in full. The data generated from my bracketing interview became part of the research process, generating knowledge that was transformed into a narrative account and analyzed alongside the narrative interviews with the participants. The bracketing interview was conducted by a colleague who is familiar with the dialogic tools that I used in the narrative interview process, discussed later in Chapter Three. This colleague was also selected for their comprehension of the dualistic nature of Western and Non-Western conceptualizations of knowing and understanding which comprises a major section of the embodiment paradigm of this studies’ theoretical framework (see Chapter One).

The research journal is a reflexive diary that Ahern (1999), Croti, (1993) and others believe comes from “an iterative, reflexive journey that entails preparation, action, evaluation, and systematic feedback about the effectiveness of the process” (Ahern, 1999, p. 408), “requiring an ability to reflect on oneself, an environment of support and reflective skills” (Myerhoff & Ruby, 1992 as cited in Rolls & Relf, 2006, p. 291). “Journals are a powerful way for individuals to give accounts of their experience” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 102) and can be a blending

of detailed field notes and personal reflections about experiences that are “felt” during the research process. They can also be used as a way to “puzzle out” (p. 103) the intimately reflexive experiences that are interwoven into the fabric of life and its overlapping domains in the narrative inquiry process. My research journal provided a space for my reflection on the private events that took place during research in relation to the experienced events with the co-creator. The research journal also became an additional resource for developing codes and themes that emerged from the co-constructed stories.

These two paths of bracketing (i.e., bracketing interview and research journal), were not meant as a sterilizing process, one of removing myself from the data, participants, and our story. Instead these two points of data integrated myself as researcher, martial artist, and co-creator more fully into the story; allowing me to take responsibility for my thoughts, feelings, and actions throughout the research process. This inextricably wove my experience as researcher, martial artist, and “other”, with that of my participant through the co-constructed nature of our relationship throughout the research process.

**Narrative Interviewing.** “Narratives come in many forms and sizes” (Riessman, 2008, p. 23) and narrative interviewing is a unique process to qualitative research (Beuthin, 2014; Spector-Mersel, 2010). Narrative interviewing bucks the tradition of open and closed questions that contain brief answers or general statements as well as the “model of a ‘facilitating’ interviewer who asks questions, and a vessel-like ‘respondent’ who gives answers” (Riessman, 2008, p. 23). Narrative interviewing emphasizes a collaborative relationship that involves two actively engaged participants that are co-constructing a narrative through a dialogic process (Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2013; Beuthin, 2014; Hydén, 2014; Riessman, 2008; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). This requires the narrative inquirer to “establish intimate participatory



relationships with participants” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 110). This change in relationship, from traditional one-on-one techniques, encourages a change in interview practice that can facilitate an open discourse for storytelling and a “teller-focused interview” (Hydén, 2014, p. 796).

“As researchers, we select the moment to turn the tape on, we select the questions to be asked...we pick up on some participant responses by responding in certain ways” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 94). The traditional interview relationship places a great deal of power in my hands as the researcher; power dynamics which I was allowed to address by utilizing narrative interviewing. During the narrative interview, the participant and I were constrained by place, time, and power dynamics both conscious (e.g., relational roles of researcher and interview participant), and unconscious (e.g., unacknowledged stereotypes) (Hydén, 2014). Narrative interviewing allowed control of the power and space to be shared by relinquishing control of the process and allowing for the conversation to become organically produced along the avenues of the participant’s story (Hydén, 2014). Some factors that I considered, as researcher, in order to facilitate a change in the interviewing process to promote storytelling were: physical alignments (e.g., body position and distance); environmental components (e.g., location and time of day); and dialogic components such as conventions of everyday conversation, “turn-taking, relevance, and entrance and exit talk” (Riessman, 2008, p. 24).

One way I facilitated this change from the traditional interviewing process that Hydén (2014) and others urge narrative inquirers to do, was through the use of dialogic conventions taken from Isaacs (1999) and Peters and Armstrong (1998), who follow in a dialogic tradition set forth by linguists such as Bakhtin (1981 and 1986), Bohm (1987), and Schön (1983). These conventions focus on the relational aspect of dialogue and how “we” as individuals do not

always listen to what is being said or how it is being said, and often times do not attend to the meaning and interactions through dialogue with the other. This dialogic process also “means that narrative accounts are co-produced and what the interviewer says is as worthy of attention as that of the interviewee. The context is vital and shaped by the back and forth dialogue of the two active participants” (Beuthin, 2014, p. 126). An example of techniques developed from these conventions of dialogue are probing prompts that delve deeper into the meaning and experience of what has just been said, usually by prompting the participant to “say more” about a particular phrase or experience.

Another dialogic technique I employed was to occasionally summarize what it is that I think we (i.e., the participant and I) have been talking about, or the X of the conversation (Peters, & Armstrong, 1998). This convention of dialogue prompts the interviewer to ask the participant if they share a similar perspective, (i.e., point of view), of what has just been said during a dialogic exchange. This was done by pausing in the conversation, at an appropriate break in dialogue, and summarizing what I believe has been talked about, and then asking for the participant’s point of view of my summarization. This was all completed in the attempt to delve further into the conversation and seek clarification of a shared dialogue. These dialogic tools allowed me to engage in extended turns of talk with the participant, which then allowed the exploration of shifts that occur in the dialogue, in order to draw connections and meaning between several events, experiences, and stories (Riessman, 2008). This lead to an organic conversation and changed the dynamic of the research relationship from interviewer and respondent to one of collaboration, a necessary condition for narrative interviewing processes.

“Narrative interviews often begin with an open, non-directing question...encouraging the flow of a story and inviting a temporal account” (Spector-Mersel, 2010, p. 214). During the

interview process, I asked the participants to tell me their story of being a martial artist using six open ended questions throughout my interview protocol (Appendix E). The questions I used for the interview protocol were not posed in any particular order but were tailored to speak to the two research questions that guided the study. During the course of the first interview, beyond my bracketing interview, I realized that there were two other questions that emerged through the participant's story. These two questions were added to the interview guide and incorporated into each subsequent interview. They are: (a) What is your philosophy of the martial arts? and (b) What are values that your practice of the martial arts should instill in you?

Using the dialogic tools previously mentioned I attempted to create a space for the participant to speak at length about their narrative, only interjecting to seek clarifying information and also to share similar or dissimilar personal experiences. Through the narrative interviewing process, my goals were to understand what led the participant to the martial arts and what their experience of learning and practicing the martial arts is like.

### **Participants**

The purpose of this study is to describe the adult learner's lived experience of learning and practicing martial arts. I selected narrative inquiry as the appropriate qualitative research approach to explore their experience through storied re-telling (Mishler, 1995). This method emphasizes and allows the researcher, the instrument for data collection, to be part of the narrative. The narrative is co-constructed through the interviews and subsequent dialogue with the participants, that lends to the storying of how, when, why, and what factors influenced their experience of learning and practicing the martial arts.

## Adult learner

There is no clear definition of what makes an adult. Some researchers may classify adults based on “normative age-graded influences” (Bjorklund, 2011, p. 7) such as biology, or “normative history-graded influences” (p. 8) such as cultural milestones (e.g., including marriage, childbearing, and other social environmental factors). However, these classifications have discrepancies such as biological age, psychological age, social age, and functional age (Bjorklund, 2011) that lead to conflicting opinions among adult education scholars. In order to not impose a predetermined definition on the participants this study included participants that self-identified as adults. Demographic variables were taken into consideration such as age, which the participants must be over 18 years old for IRB approval. The participants were required to self-identify as adults because experience is central to adult learning because it is one of the most valuable resources adults bring to the learning process (Merriam & Brockett, 2007). Participants were asked to complete a demographic survey, which allowed the participant to provide the necessary information for their inclusion in the study as well as other information such as: (a) Race/Ethnicity, (b) Number of Family Members Practicing/Relation, (c) Martial Art(s) Practiced, (d) Rank, and (e) Amount of Time Practiced. Table 2 represents the collected demographic information of each participant.

**Selection Process.** Participants for this study were selected using a criterion specific, purposeful sampling method with a network or snowball sampling method for support (LeCompte, Preissle, & Tesch, 2003; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). Merriam (2009) states that “[T]o begin purposive sampling, you must first determine what selection criteria are essential” (Merriam, 2009, p. 77). Three criteria were selected for this study. The first criterion selected

Table 2 *Participant Demographics*

Name (Pseudonym)	Age	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Number of Family Members Practicing and Relation	Martial Art(s) Practiced	Rank	Amount of Time Practiced
Anna	25	Female	Caucasian	2/Sister, Husband	Brazilian Jujitsu	Blue Belt	3 years
					Judo	Green Belt	3 years
Boomer	36	Male	Caucasian	1	Bujikan	5th Kyu	10+ years
					Wal Lum Kung Fu	8th Kyu	4 years
					Various Styles	No Rank	3 years
Christine	31	Female	Caucasian	0	Muay Thai	No Rank	6 Months
					Brazilian Jujitsu	Purple	5 years
Derrick	35	Male	Caucasian	2/Father, Brother	Aikido	Shoda n (1st Black Belt)	10 years
Eric	40	Male	N/A	1/Brother	Uechi Ryu	Ikkyu (1st Brown testing soon for 1st Black Belt)	8 years
					Judo	1st Brown Belt	5 years
					Tae Kwon Do	Yello w Belt	1 years
					Goju Ryu	Brown Belt	1 years
					Tang Soo Do	N/A	Less than 1 year

Table 2 Continued *Participant Demographics*

Name (Pseudonym)	Age	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Number of Family Members Practicing and Relation	Martial Art(s) Practiced	Rank	Amount of Time Practiced
					Rothrock Kung Fu Others	N/A	Less than 1 year
Frank	24	Male	N/A	4	Isshin Ryu Tae Kwon Do Satori Ryu Iaido Brazilian Jujitsu Kick Boxing Boxing	3rd Black Belt Black Belt Brown Belt White Belt N/A N/A	14 years 1 years Forever 4 years 2--5 years 2--5 years
Greg	43	Male	Caucasian	1	Okinawan Uechi Ryu Karate	Ikkyu (1st Brown)	4--5 years
Helen	67	Female	Caucasian/Western European	0	Taoist Tai Chi	N/A	17 years
Ian	27	Male	Caucasian	0	Karate Shin Gi Tai Jujitsu Judo	Shodan Nikkyu Sankyū	5 years 7 years 5 years

for the purposeful sampling approach was generated from the research questions in Chapter One namely: What is the adult learner's experience of practicing the martial arts? The participants self-identified as adults who practice martial arts and as previously stated in this chapter the age criterion for adult was a minimum of 18 years old for IRB approval. The range of ages of the participants was 24-67 years of age with the average age of all participants being 36 years old. The six male participants averaged 34 years of age while the smaller sample of female averaged 41 years of age.

The second criterion emerges from the critique of the field of martial arts research from Chapter Two, namely what is the experience of the adult learner who self-identifies as an advanced martial arts student. After the initial selection of participants, a network or snowball method (LeCompte, Preissle, & Tesch, 2003; Patton, 2002) "in which each successive participant...is named by a preceding...individual" (LeCompte, Preissle, & Tesch, 2003, p. 73) was employed to locate other participants who meet the criteria selected for the study. This method did not result in any participants who volunteered for this study, instead the participants came from either a personal acquaintance with the primary investigator, answering a participation flyer posted at various dojos and gym locations by the primary researcher (Appendix B), or from a suggestion after meeting with the head instructor or "sensei" of each dojo that was visited. In total 41 number of dojos were visited or contacted either by phone or e-mail.

The third criterion for selection was geographic location. Due to budgetary limitations only a limited geographic area was available to draw a sample from for face to face interviews. I attempted to contact thirty-three dojos and instructors within the geographic area the study was conducted in. Of the dojos contacted I was invited to come for initial interviews and meetings to

25 of the dojos. The participants who were willing to share their stories came from eight different gyms, dojos, and martial arts studios. Two of the participants were from the same dojo. All of the interviews with the exception of one was drawn and conducted from a specific city within the same geographic area.

**Sample Size.** An ambiguity of qualitative research is the number of participants needed for the study (Patton, 2002) and unfortunately, there is no definitive answer to how many participants are needed for a qualitative study (Merriam, 2009). Patton (2002) stated that “there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry” (p. 244) and urged qualitative inquirers to select sample size based on “what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what’s at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources” (p. 244). Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended that the sampling process continue until a saturation point is reached in which no new information can be drawn from the interviews, subsequent coding, and analysis. By using a saturation point approach, where no new information is being produced in the analysis phase of the study, I was able to include as many participants as is needed to answer the research questions of this study. This approach allowed for a thorough understanding of the participants experience, through their stories, and includes as many stories as is necessary, so as not to exclude any experiences that may shed new light on the phenomena under exploration. The number of participants that were required to reach a point of saturation was nine participants as determined by the coding and analysis of each interview prior to the conduction of the next interview.

**Site Description.** Interviews conducted with the participants were at locations negotiated with the researcher through personal communications including phone, face to face, and e-mail. I wanted to honor the participant’s experience of the martial arts and sought to conduct the



interviews in a setting that was most comfortable for them as martial artists (e.g., the dojo or area for training). However, each interview was conducted off site, (i.e., not in the dojo where they practiced) at a public or private location that was easily accessible and convenient to the participant.

In order to capture the interviews in as complete a manner as possible, without being invasive to the space where they are conducted, two digital voice recorders and the research journal were used. After the consent forms (Appendix D) were explained, any questions the participant had about the study were answered, the demographic survey was completed, and the consent forms were signed I asked the participant if they would be comfortable if I took notes during the interview in order to make highlight interesting aspects of their narrative that I would like to return to. The length of the interviews varied depending on how comfortable the participant is telling their story as well as how engaged in dialogue we became. The interviews lasted until the participant felt that they expressed their story in an appropriate manner. Each interview was conducted face to face and was scheduled to last approximately one hour. The shortest interview lasted 45 minutes while the longest was 90 minutes in length. Each interview was transcribed as soon as possible following the end of the interview. This was to ensure that the experience of co-constructing the narrative with the participant was still fresh in my mind and that my best effort was made to not exclude any part of the relationship that may degrade over time.

### **Interview Process**

This study began by conducting the bracketing interview with an academic colleague who is familiar with the dualistic nature of Western and Non-Western conceptualizations of knowing and understanding. This bracketing interview followed the same structure as the

interviews that were conducted with the participants, with the interviewing colleague following the interview guide that was used with each interview I conducted, but allowing for the dialogic process to take the narrative wherever it may lead. My story of learning and practicing the martial arts was coded, categorized, and analyzed, as each participant's narratives were, and utilized alongside those narratives to establish the themes and findings that will be discussed in Chapter Four.

The first participants for the study were initially selected from a group of known participants to the researcher. These participants were selected based on their self-identification with all of the criteria for selection into the study. Each of these participants were sent the e-mail document for participation (Appendix C) in the study. After I negotiated the location and time of meeting, and I described the study in more depth with the participants, the participants signed the consent form and filled out the demographic information sheet (Appendix D). The interviews were conducted with the participants, varying in length of time as mentioned previously. After conducting the interviews, the participants were asked if they know of any other martial artists who may be potential participants for this study. Based on their recommendations the contact e-mails found in Appendices A, B, and C were sent out. Since no other participants were recruited through the purposeful snowball sampling method a search of local geographically close dojos and martial arts instructors was conducted using internet search engines and telephone directories. Each entry found was contacted using e-mail, phone calls, or in-person visits and provided with the documents for recruitment found in Appendix A and B.

The interview process was already discussed, and relied on the narrative interviewing process to establish a conversational dialogue with the participant and researcher, co-constructing the narrative. In order to begin each interview, I prompted the participant to tell me

their story of learning and practicing the martial arts (Appendix E). From this point I engaged with the participant in co-constructing their story, prompting them to say more about aspects of their story that we find interesting together. When the narrative interview came to an end where the participant and I had no new contributions to add to the current dialogue, I thanked the participant for sharing their story and upon leaving the location immediately utilized the research journal to document my reflections upon the experience. I wrote in the journal any feelings or thoughts that came to mind as a result of our interaction through the interview process.

After each interview with the participants the data from the voice recorders and field journal were transcribed. This transcription occurred as close to the end of the interview as possible in order to keep the experience in the forefront of my mind, so that the degradation that occurs over time would be as minimal as possible. In addition to the transcripts a vignette (described in greater detail in Chapter Four) was also given to the participants. These transcribed documents were then taken back to the participants in order to member check with them and ensure that what was captured in the interview “rings true” with their experiences. Of the nine participants I was able to member check with all but two of the participants. I only received feedback from two of the participants who agreed with the accuracy of the transcripts and vignette. After the member checking was completed the data was analyzed using a comprehensive narrative thematic analysis process and Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six phases of thematic analysis (these will be discussed in the next section). Once each set of data was analyzed the process of interview, transcribing, member checking, and analyzing was repeated with each new participant until a point of saturation was reached in the analysis phase, as mentioned previously.

## **Narrative Analysis**

If stories are told for a purpose, then what is the best way to analyze the stories for that purpose? Looking at what is said or how it is said? Is the ordering of what is said important? Stories are how we make meaning of our lives. An analysis that down plays the meaning of the stories to us (i.e., our interpretation of the stories), or removes our interpretation and contribution to the story was not appropriate for this study. Narrative analysis “refers to a family of approaches to diverse kinds of texts, which have in common a storied form” (Riessman, 2005, p. 1). Riessman (2005) told us that “there are many ways to narrate experience...” (p. 11) and that there are also many models of narrative analysis (e.g., structural, thematic, and dialogic or performative). An attempt to cover all types of narrative analysis was beyond the scope of this study. However, I give a brief description of the two primary models of narrative analysis (structural and thematic). Following this brief description of the two dominant modes of narrative analysis I delve further into the model of narrative analysis used, which utilizes concepts from both Polkinghorne (1995) and Clandinin and Connelly (2000).

### **Structural Narrative Analysis**

Different types of narrative analysis exist that researchers may use. A structural narrative analysis places the emphasis on the “telling” or the ways in which it is told, and the narrative itself (Riessman, 2005). This method of analysis treats the narrative as an object for analysis. The content of the narrative is important, but more attention is focused on the language used throughout the narrative and how the teller by deciding how to tell the story can make it more persuasive (Riessman, 2005). Prominent narrative researchers who pioneered this form of analysis include William Labov (1972, 1982) and Waletzky (Labov & Waletzky, 1967) as well as James Gee (1985, 1991). While structural narrative analysis is interesting and has its place in

the discipline of narrative inquiry (Gee, 1985, 1991; Labov, 1972, 1982; Labov & Waletzky, 1967), for the purposes of answering the research questions I employed a different form of narrative analysis—thematic narrative analysis.

### **Thematic Narrative Analysis**

Braun and Clarke (2006) defined thematic analysis in psychology as “a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 6). They claimed that it is “poorly demarcated and rarely-acknowledged, yet widely used” (p. 4) as an analytic method. Without clear definitions and conceptualizations of what is meant by thematic analysis, a laissez faire attitude may begin to arise in qualitative research that utilizes thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Narrative inquiry addresses Braun and Clarke’s warnings by utilizing a framework, which still allows flexibility in the analysis, which focuses on the content of the speech. Analysts interpret what is said by focusing on the meaning that fluent users of the language would interpret from the story (Riessman, 2008).

Narrative inquirers rely on thematic analysis as an intuitive approach that is used in theory building across many cases and for finding common thematic elements across events and participants (Riessman, 2008). Thematic analysis is concerned with “what” is said, rather than to “whom”, “how”, or for “what purposes”, and has become an appealing approach to novice qualitative researchers (Riessman, 2008). A distinguishing feature of narrative thematic analysis is that the story remains “intact” and theorizing stems from the case rather than disembodied categories taken out of the context of their stories for comparison across cases (Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2013; Riessman, 2008). Thematic analysis differs from structural analysis in narrative inquiry by focusing on the “told” (i.e., the participant’s experience of events) rather than the “telling” (i.e., how or for what purpose is the story told) (Mishler, 1995; Riessman,

2008). Another difference is how thematic analysis is concerned with the content communicated instead of the structural focus on how a narrative is used to make a point to the audience (Riessman, 2008).

When compared to other qualitative research methods such as grounded theory, Riessman (2008) vocalizes four clear distinctions that frame thematic analysis in narrative research. The first distinction is that narrative thematic analysis utilizes prior theory to guide inquiry while maintaining watch for novel theoretical insights. The second is that narrative inquirers keep the story “intact” for interpretive purposes, even though identifying boundaries can be difficult and interpretive in narrative research. The third distinction is similar to Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) “three-dimensional space” where narrative researchers attend to time, place, and context in order to reject generic explanations (Riessman, 2008), which are broad, categorical, and add little substance to the understanding of the co-constructed narrative. Finally, narrative thematic analysis is committed to case-centered analysis as opposed to attempting to generate inductively stable concepts that can be used to theorize across cases (Riessman, 2008).

### **Comprehensive Thematic Narrative Analysis**

The two research questions that guide this study are: (1) What experience(s) led the adult learner to the martial arts; and (2) What is the adult learner’s experience of learning and practicing the martial arts? At the core of these two questions is the adult learner’s story, (i.e., their interpretation of the meaning derived from their experiences concerning the martial arts). I chose narrative inquiry as the methodology that was employed throughout the study because it allowed me to immerse myself, and all of the identities that I bring into the research relationship, in the data. This immersion, although coming from Western research paradigms, instills a non-Western perspective through the multitude of voices and identities represented within the co-

constructed nature of the narratives. The focus of this study was less on the structure of the narrative, or “how” the experiences are told, and more in favor of exploring “what” is being told. This implies the implementation of thematic analysis. In order to fully articulate and situate my understanding of the narrative analysis process to be used in this study, I chose to formulate a comprehensive analysis that addresses the four defining characteristics of narrative thematic analysis (Riessman, 2008).

The first unique characteristic that I attend to is the use of prior theory in guiding the inquiry. Polkinghorne (1995) used thematic analysis that leans heavily on the concept of emplotment. This concept of emplotment, when treated to the analysis of the narratives will situate them in a sequence of beginning, middle, and end. Polkinghorne (1995) used the term “paradigmatic analysis of narrative” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 12) to frame the storying of narrative accounts in research. The “paradigmatic analysis provides a method to uncover the commonalities that exist across the stories that make up a study’s database. It functions to generate general knowledge from a set of particular instances” (p. 14). This paradigmatic analysis addresses Riessman’s (2008) first characteristic of narrative by establishing a framework which is guided by theoretical concepts, such as emplotment, which situates narratives in a sequence of beginning, middle, and end. The second characteristic is also addressed through the sequencing of the events of the narrative in an order (beginning, middle, and end), which allows stories to remain intact, bounded by sequencing.

However, Polkinghorne goes on to state that “the strength of paradigmatic procedures is their capacity to develop general knowledge about a collection of stories. This kind of knowledge, however, is abstract and formal, and by necessity underplays the unique and particular aspects of each story” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 15). In order to address this concern, as

well as reinforce the first two characteristics and validate the third and fourth characteristics in the analysis, Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) "three-dimensional space" was utilized in conjunction with Polkinghorne's (1995) conceptualization of plot.

Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) "three-dimensional space" examines "*personal* and *social* (interaction); *past*, *present*, and *future* (continuity); combined with the notion of *place* (situation)" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50). This "three-dimensional space" attends to time, place, and context in order to "reject the idea of generic explanations" (Riessman, 2005, p. 74). The emplotment of the co-constructed narrative and situating it within a "three-dimensional space" allowed my analysis to be "flexible and attends to the personal, the specific, and the particular" (Kramp, 2004, p. 108) experiences of the participant. This method of analysis frames our story from the point of view of the storyteller or narrator, privileging their lived experience of a particular moment or moments rather than simply observing the participant. This honors the final characteristic of narrative thematic analysis by committing to a case-centered analysis of each co-constructed story, and maintains a flexibility for comparison across other cases without losing the intact story to generalizability.

This comprehensive narrative thematic analysis, which integrates Polkinghorne's (1995) conceptualization of emplotment and Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) "three-dimensional space" was implemented to analyze the co-constructed narrative for a holistic understanding of the participant's experience of being a martial artist. Specifically paying attention to the experiences that led them to the martial arts and their experiences of learning and practicing the martial arts. I was particularly interested in the similarities that exist between themes that emerged from my own narrative of coming to the martial arts and the participant's narrative. I



also paid attention to the dissimilarities that arose throughout the narrative causing a dissonance in our shared experience.

### **Analyzing the Data**

In order to analyze the data collected for this study I employed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis. Since establishing the need to use a comprehensive narrative thematic analysis, the six phases that Braun and Clarke offer provide an order to the chaos that is qualitative data. The first phase is to familiarize yourself with the data. For this study it means I transcribed the data verbatim in order to become more fully immersed in the stories than just as a co-constructor. This is an interpretive act where "meanings are created" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 17) and the initial coding phase begins.

Phase two of the guide is generating the initial codes. I "generate[d] a list of ideas about what is in the data and what is interesting about them" (p. 18). This list of codes was used to organize the data into meaningful groups. At this phase I also began to implement the conceptualizations drawn from the comprehensive narrative thematic analysis. This phase shaped the codes along the lines of what constitutes narrative, according to the conceptualizations of emplotment and three-dimensional space.

Phase three is concerned with searching for themes. This involves analyzing codes and "consider[ing] how different codes may combine to form overarching theme" (p. 19). Since the overarching themes will portray similarities to the aspects of plot in a story and be grounded in time, space, and context this phase will rely on the conceptualizations of the comprehensive narrative thematic analysis. This phase began the process of re-presenting the co-constructed narrative because it allowed me to "start thinking about the relationship between codes, between

themes, and between different levels of themes” (p. 20), in essence allowing me the opportunity to make sense of our story.

Phase four promotes reviewing the themes that have been generated through the three previous phases. This review in their model is broken down into two levels of refining the themes. The first level is reviewing the themes that have been generated. This means reading the collated extracts and long segments that the themes emerged from and considering if there is a coherent pattern that emerges. This phase blends well with the comprehensive narrative thematic analysis because it allows for the story that is forming to be grounded within the context of what it originally came from, instead of being some abstract segment of text floating in the ether. If the review finds coherent patterns in the themes then moving to the second level is recommended in which a refining of the themes begins. This refinement is similar to the process of review, but it is applied to the entire data set. This will be an iterative process due to the nature of how the data is collected and analyzed, building off of each subsequent interview. This phase also assists with identifying themes that may have been missed during earlier coding stages, or earlier interviews.

Phase five in Braun and Clarke’s (2006) model focuses on defining and naming themes that have made it through the other four phases of the process. Braun and Clarke state that this phase is not simply about paraphrasing but attempting to “identify what is interesting about them and why” (p. 22). This entails providing extracts from the transcripts that support the definitions and names given to the themes that have been selected up to this phase of the analysis.

The final phase of the process, phase six, is about producing the report. “The task of the write-up of a thematic analysis...is to tell the complicated story of your data in a way which convinces the reader of the merit and validity of your analysis” (p. 23). This phase is where I

take the greatest responsibility and privilege (Kramp, 2004) to honor the experience of the participant in re-telling their story that we co-constructed together through the narrative interview. This phase of the analysis will be detailed in Chapter Four of this study, along with the representation of the participant's story.

### **Trustworthiness**

In order for research findings to be trusted and ultimately acted upon to improve practice, the rigor of the research must be addressed (Merriam, 1995). Merriam (1995) points to two approaches that have been used by qualitative researchers to address concerns of validity, reliability, and rigor. The first is the standard approach to “positivist threats to validity and reliability made famous by Campbell and Stanley (1963) and Cook and Campbell (1979)” (p. 52). While this approach has merit, I believe that it does not fit in with the paradigmatic lens of this study. The second approach that Merriam (1995) suggests focuses on the unique nature of the ontological and epistemological assumptions of qualitative research that run counter, in many cases, to the more positivist orientations of quantitative research. This demands that “different conceptualizations of validity and reliability” (p. 52) be utilized to assess the rigor and trustworthiness of a study. Trustworthiness will be utilized as the definition and assessment of rigor for this study.

I believe that being trustworthy in a qualitative research capacity involves honoring the experiences of both participant and researcher before, during, and after the moment of social interchange (Beuthin, 2014). Being trustworthy means paying attention to the tensions that “keep the interviewer alert in that they call us to pause, to continually question and tease apart, to rethink or gain new insight” (p. 131). In narrative inquiry, the “storytellers want to be engaged” (p. 130), the stories are purposeful, told for a reason, contain multiple meanings, and “we tell

stories to live” (p. 130). Beuthin (2014) believes that the combination of the willingness to share by vulnerable persons and the trust that they place in the research dynamic humbles her as an interviewer. This leads Beuthin (2014) to “feel great responsibility and privilege to do this well, to pay full honor to the voice of the storyteller” (p. 130), and I echo this sentiment.

In order to establish trustworthiness throughout this study I primarily focused on five components that were used to triangulate the data. The triangulation of data relies on the inclusion of multiple sources and points in time from a variety of methods that ensure that a holistic understanding and picture is built, not just a fraction of it (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). The first component is my bracketing interview that I conducted before any interview data was collected from the participants. This allowed me as the researcher to reflect and explore my experience as a martial artist and what led me to practice the martial arts. This exposed my personal biases and assumptions and allowed myself as martial artist and researcher to be fully engaged in the co-construction of the participant’s narrative while understanding and accounting for the influence of my own experiences on the research process (Rolls & Relf, 2006).

The second way that I attempted to instill trustworthiness into the study is through the establishment of a theoretical framework that draws from the social constructivist paradigm (e.g., Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011), narrative inquiry (e.g., Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Polkinghorne, 1995), and embodied knowledge (e.g., Amann, 2003; Freiler, 2008; Merriam & Associates, 2007; Michelson, 1998). This theoretical framework, described more fully in Chapter One, addresses the demand for a different conceptualization of validity and reliability (Merriam, 1995). This theoretical framework closely aligns with my ontological and epistemological beliefs regarding reality as the interpretation of our experiences that are socially constructed and re-told to us, through us, by us, and for us. These stories of how “we” are and

come to be in the world are not only cognitively constructed but incorporate all of the ways of knowing that construct us as “we” are; effectively re-memembering the body and other ways of knowing into the meaning making process. This theoretical framework allowed me to explore the perspectives of the participants, honoring the co-constructed nature of the narrative process and data that resulted from this social exchange.

The use of a research journal was the third point of data that built trustworthiness into the study. The research journal allowed me to blend detailed field notes and personal reflections about the experiences that occurred throughout the study into the coding and analysis phases. This blending produced a reflexive diary that Ahern (1999), Croti, (1993) and others believe comes from “an iterative, reflexive journey that entails preparation, action, evaluation, and systematic feedback about the effectiveness of the process” (Ahern, 1999, p. 408), “requiring an ability to reflect on oneself, an environment of support and reflective skills” (Myerhoff & Ruby, 1992 as cited in Rolls & Relf, 2006, p. 291). This journal was used as a way to “puzzle out” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 103) the intimately reflexive experiences that are interwoven into the fabric of life and its overlapping domains in the narrative inquiry process. By including the research journal in the data corpus, I was able to include my personal experiences that might otherwise be negated through the sterilization of the researcher in other methodological approaches. This lends further credibility to myself, as researcher and martial artist, for being the instrument for data collection (e.g., Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Creswell, 2013; Kramp, 2004; Merriam)

The fourth method of establishing trustworthiness in the study was member checking (i.e., participant validation) with the participants, which I will do two times, once the data has been collected and again when it is analyzed (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). This involves “taking

data collected from study participants, and the tentative interpretations of these data, back to the people from whom they were derived and asking if the interpretations are plausible, if they ‘ring true’” (Merriam, 1995, p. 54). Rossman and Rallis (2012) state that “this can be done with interview transcripts as a method for eliciting further information and with emerging analysis” (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, p. 65). Member checking was conducted using e-mail communications when the participants wished to contribute more to the emerging analysis of our co-constructed narrative.

The fifth measure to ensure trustworthiness throughout the study was to use pseudonyms that I assigned to each of the participants data and eliminate any identifying information from their transcripts and final analysis such as people, places, or events that might allow for some type of identification of the participant. This was done in order to ensure as much protection of the participant’s identity as possible.

Trustworthiness, validity, and reliability are “legitimate concerns about the rigor of qualitative research” (Merriam, 1995, p. 52). No study can truly be trustworthy because as researchers we are always interpreting what is being said or done for a particular purpose. However, it is my responsibility as a narrative inquirer to re-tell the participants experiences as we co-constructed them in a manner that protects their story and honors their voice. Chapter Four contains the participant’s stories as I have chosen to represent them in a manner that I feel conveys their experience of practicing martial arts. In this study it is also my responsibility to exhibit trustworthiness by not sterilizing myself from the study. This implies that I must embody the work as the researcher and as a martial artist. An example of this embodying and inability to sterilize myself is the role of one of the philosophical tenets of judo: *jita kyoei*. Roughly translated this means mutual respect and benefit/welfare. This philosophy applies to the martial

arts as they are practiced in the dojo but also to the way I as a judoka (someone who practices judo) live my life outside of the dojo. This philosophical tenet permeates all aspects of my life and I cannot remove myself from it (i.e., martial arts are a way of life) much like I cannot “not” interact with the participant.

### **Summary**

The goal of Chapter Three was to discuss the methodology and methods employed throughout the study. The narrative embodied knowing theoretical framework first brought up in Chapter One was defined further in Chapter Three. It addressed why and how a qualitative approach is most appropriate for answering the research questions of this study. The social constructivist element of the theoretical framework was also elaborated, due to the many flavors of constructivism that can muddy the waters for beginning researchers. This also lent rationale for why a social constructivist paradigm was selected, guided by the conceptualizations of Berger and Luckmann (1966) and their interpretations of the social construction of reality.

The social constructivist paradigm was selected because it closely aligns with my ontological and epistemological beliefs. I believe that “reality” is not an absolute and that there are multiple realities that an individual must navigate within each moment. I also hold the belief that individuals come to know what is real or “true” through the shared interaction with the environment and the others that share that environment with them. This means that knowledge is socially constructed through the interactions with the “other”. Individuals make meaning of their experiences through “meaning-making, sense making, [and] attributional activities” (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011, p. 116).

The social constructivist paradigm places a premium on the role of language and discourse in social relationships and functions. The importance of language and how we

construct and communicate our ideas and thoughts in a social constructivist paradigm, illustrates the need for a theoretical framework that places an equal value on the use of language and the co-construction of knowledge through social interaction. To this end narrative inquiry was selected as the theoretical framework to guide the methodology and methods of this study.

Narrative inquiry as discussed in Chapter Three is the theoretical approach to narrative, paying special attention to the terms “story” and “co-construction”. The term story is defined using Polkinghorne’s (1995) conceptualization in which stories “signify narratives that combine a succession of incidents into a unified episode” (p. 7). An emphasis is placed on the “plot” which arranges the story into a narrative. In conjunction with Polkinghorne (1995), is Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) “three-dimensional space”, which includes “*personal* and *social* (interaction); *past*, *present*, and *future* (continuity); combined with the notion of *place* (situation)” (p. 50) to frame a story as a narrative.

The social constructivist paradigm emphasizes the co-construction of knowledge and reality through social interaction and narrative inquiry posits that a story is co-constructed because at the simplest terms there is a teller and a listener. “Narrative inquiry assumes ‘personal involvement’ as the very condition that makes it possible for you, as researcher to gather and interpret narratives” (Kramp, 2004, p. 14). This personal involvement in the co-construction of the narrative is paramount to the view of qualitative research in which the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection (Merriam, 1995). Narrative inquiry allows researchers to bring themselves into the relationship of the story that is being co-constructed instead of removing themselves from that story.

Narrative inquiry was also discussed as the method for co-constructing and generating stories with participants. Field texts (e.g., bracketing interview, research journal, narrative



interviews) bring together multiple points of data that allow researchers to fill in the gaps in stories to paint a more holistic picture of the experience. A bracketing interview was used to expose my personal biases and assumptions, following a process described by Rolls and Relf (2006). The data generated from my bracketing interview also became part of the research as well (i.e., a text to be analyzed alongside other data points). This allowed my own experiences as a martial artist to become intertwined with those of the participants, while still taking into account my bias and assumptions. A research journal was also used to help triangulate data and fill in gaps of the co-constructed narrative. A research journal is a blending of detailed field notes and personal reflections about the felt experiences during the research process. It required me to be reflexive and open to the tensions that are experienced during the research process.

The narrative interviewing process, that bucks traditional open and closed questions that result in short or general statements was discussed in Chapter Three. Narrative interviewing emphasizes the collaborative relationship of the researcher and participant in the co-construction of the narrative through dialogue (Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2013; Beuthin, 2014; Hydén, 2014; Riessman, 2008; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). This relationship encourages a change in interview practices that facilitate an open discourse for storytelling and a “teller-focused interview” (Hydén, 2014, p. 796).

The participants were also described in Chapter Three. The definitions of an adult learner were established, and due to IRB considerations the biological age, set at a minimum of 18 years old, was used to determine what constitutes an adult. However, the participants must self-identify as adults as well, because experience is central to adult learning and to the ontological and epistemological assumptions of this study. The selection process for this study was described as a criterion specific, purposeful sampling method with a network or snowball

sampling method for support (LeCompte, Preissle, & Tesch, 2003; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). The criterion for inclusion in this study was that the participants identified as adults (i.e., being a minimum of 18 years old) and the participants identified as advanced martial artists (i.e., a martial artist who is not a beginner, nor are they a sensei or teacher). The sample size for this study is also discussed in this chapter and utilized a saturation point through the comprehensive thematic analysis to determine when to stop interviewing.

How the data were analyzed was discussed in Chapter Three as well. Narrative analysis was described, briefly touching on structural narrative analysis and going more in-depth with thematic narrative analysis. The analysis method selected for this study is a blending of Polkinghorne's (1995) conceptualization of emplotment and Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional space into a comprehensive thematic narrative analysis. This will allow specific attention to be paid to the experiences that led the participant to the martial arts and their experiences of learning and practicing the martial arts. The process of analyzing the data was also described utilizing Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phase model of thematic analysis.

Finally, trustworthiness and issues surrounding rigor, reliability, and validity in qualitative research was discussed. I believe that trustworthiness is shown in narrative inquiry through the capacity to honor the experiences of both participant and researcher, in all phases of the study. In order to establish trustworthiness throughout the study four components were focused on that allowed for triangulation of data: (a) a bracketing interview; (b) the use of a social constructivist paradigm and theoretical framework; (c) the research journal; and (d) member checking or participant validation. These four components allowed me, as the Narrative Inquirer, to re-tell the participants experiences as we co-constructed them in a manner that protects and honors their story and our experiences.

Chapter Four contains the findings generated from the co-constructed narratives, including the coding and analysis of the stories and the categories and themes that emerged as a result. The narratives are also re-presented in a short vignette format that collect the experience of the participant into a version that is readily accessible for different audiences.

## CHAPTER FOUR ANALYSIS OF DATA

The purpose of this narrative study was to explore adult learners' lived experiences of learning and practicing martial arts in the southeastern United States of America. The two research questions that guided this study are: (a) What experience(s) led the adult learner to the martial arts? and (b) What is the adult learner's experience of learning and practicing the martial arts? In Chapter Three I explored narrative inquiry, which was selected to best answer the research questions. Narrative inquiry was also selected to work in conjunction with the narrative knowing paradigm selected to form part of the theoretical framework for this study. Chapter Three also introduced the demographic information collected about the participants which will be elaborated to a greater extent in Chapter Four.

Chapter Four presents the analysis of the data. The chapter begins by reviewing the analysis procedure for the study, paying attention to how the comprehensive thematic narrative analysis, comprised of Polkinghorne's (1995) conceptualization of emplotment and Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three dimensional space, was utilized to analyze the data. Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of analysis are then described and used to order the analytic procedures. Each phase of the analysis will be presented, explaining what occurred during the analysis and providing excerpts from the data for support. Of important note is phase three of the analysis where each participant's narrative will be re-presented in a form that follows the thematic narrative analytic procedure backed by Braun and Clarke's (2006) phases of analysis. The vignettes of each participant will also be accompanied by the categories and sub-categories that were a result of the analytic procedure given to each narrative. Following this section, the analysis of all the findings from each of the narratives will be shown outlining the four themes

that emerged and how they interact with each other. Chapter Four will conclude with a summary of the key findings explaining what was discovered through the analysis procedures.

### **Analyzing the Data**

To maintain order throughout the analysis Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis was employed. This method allowed the comprehensive thematic narrative analysis to work while structuring the order and phases that the analytic process followed. These six phases are:

1. Immersion in the data and beginning coding
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes
  - a. Emplotment of narratives
4. Review of data
  - a. Exploration of patterns
  - b. Refining themes across all data
5. Define and name themes
  - a. Providing extracts to support definitions and names
6. Re-presentation of analyzed data and themes

#### **Phase One: Immersion in the Data and Beginning Coding**

Immersing myself in the data meant I had to transcribe all of the interviews verbatim as close to the time that they were conducted. I was able to transcribe each interview within one week of its actual conduction. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) this phase is also where the initial coding begins. I relied on the comments function within Microsoft word to add initial thoughts during the transcriptions of the interviews, which contributed to an initial attempt to

code the data. Alongside these comments I also wrote in my research journal about each interview and allowed for those thoughts to add to the richness of the data. Some examples from the research journal that illustrate this are *“Really glad to hear his story and the similarities and differences between the two interviews”*. This example came from the second interview I conducted which followed the first interview on the same day that both were conducted and allowed for me to formulate a comparison between the two. Another example which brings to light an issue that will be addressed in Chapter Five is,

*“I feel that, as I am the only participant of color, there is/are distinct perspectives that are missing from my study. I think that this is okay because I can account for this as something to be addressed in future studies. But something just doesn’t seem right to me. I feel that I am missing a lot of stories and that I am potentially misrepresenting the population as a whole, even though I know that is not what Qual work seeks to do. Something just makes me feel awkward”*. (Research Journal)

This feeling of awkwardness and potential lack of diversity in the study show an immersion with the data that does not occur from a surface reading only.

Two final examples of my immersion in the data from my research journal are, *“Their story came to life for me. My responsibility is to share that life with others”*. This speaks to my view as a co-constructor of their narratives and how I wish to embody trustworthiness throughout the study.

*“Advanced students are beginning to complete the circle of embodiment: Mind, Body, Spirit they embody a different % of each probably more body but are beginning to explore more mind and spirit...everytime I ask the philosophy question there is a prescribed answer followed by what they really think...through the transcripts and coding/analysis I can see my transition/evolution as a researcher—it’s great allowing the conversation to go where it needs to”*. (Research Journal)

This excerpt from my research journal shows my progression as a researcher and how I am continually finding new ways to immerse myself within the data, especially interviews.

After the transcriptions were completed I continued to immerse myself in the data by reading the transcripts two additional times before moving on to phase two of Braun and Clarke's (2006) model. This allowed me to read the transcripts aloud and reimagine myself within the interview process. This also allowed for me to begin crafting the vignettes that will be presented later in Phase Three of this chapter.

### **Phase Two: Generating Initial Codes**

Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) phases of analysis, generating codes in phase two was a hectic ordeal. As the interview was transcribed, I generated initial codes for each interview independent of the other interviews. All coding in this phase was conducted by hand to continue what I felt was a further immersion into the data. According to Saldana (2016) a code "is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (Saldana, 2016, p. 4). This phase went through a two-step process, the first step of which was what Saldana (2016) refers to as pre-coding, which involves indicating an important code or segment of data that sticks out through circling, highlighting, bolding, coloring or any other method to enrich the data that brings attention to the segment. The second step in this process was an eclectic coding or first impression coding (Saldana, 2016) in relation to the questions of the interview guide and those that were produced organically through the interview. An example can be found in Table 3.

This phase produced a wealth of data and began to show how I might better organize the data into some type of coherent form. An expected consequence of this phase is what follows in phase three, a table of themes, categories, sub-categories, and variations of each participants'

Table 3 *Example of Eclectic or First Impression Coding in Relation to Interview Questions*

Pseudonym	Interview Question	First Impression Code
Ian	How did you get started in the martial arts?	Western Media Exposure
	What does your practice mean to you now?	<i>“most important part of my life”</i>
Helen	What is it like to talk about experience vs. Showing?	<i>“it’s meaningless until you get there”</i>
	How do you identify as an advanced martial artist?	<i>“it’s not necessarily the 17 years”</i>
Greg	How does your practice show up outside of the dojo?	<i>“Living in the day to day”</i>

narrative. However, an unexpected consequence of this phase is the short vignettes that precede each table that are meant to embody the essence of the interview and each participant’s journey.

### **Phase Three: Searching for Themes**

After the eclectic or open coding of phase two was completed I began moving in to Braun and Clarke’s (2006) phase three, which consists of searching for themes and considering how the analysis of “different codes may combine to form overarching theme[s]” (p. 19). Because of the similarities of overarching themes and aspects of emplotment, phase three was where I began the process of re-presenting the co-constructed narrative that was born from the interview process as well. This allowed me to “start thinking about the relationship between codes, between themes, and between different levels of themes” (p. 20), in essence allowing me the opportunity to make sense of our story.



Presented here is the re-presentation of the co-constructed narrative of each participant's interview. This re-presentation is in the format of vignettes that are brief but evocative, containing what I distilled as important through our co-construction of their narrative. They contain elements of plot, specifically a beginning, middle, and end (Polkinghorne, 1995). The vignettes also contain the personal, spacial, and temporal considerations brought to the analysis process through Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional space. Each vignette utilizes the language of the participants' as much as possible and is a composite of the narrative that emerged through my analytic process. The vignettes attempt to retain the uniqueness of each individual narrative, as well as their particular sense of telling. Accompanying these vignettes are the themes, categories, sub-categories, and variations that emerged and were combined through the second phase of analysis.

This structure orders the themes as the broad overall aspects that emerged through my analysis of the data. The categories and sub-categories support the themes, which will be discussed in phase five when I begin to define the primary themes that were contained across all of the interviews. There were also some variations within some of the sub-categories that warranted their own section. The order of presentation follows the order in which the participants were interviewed, beginning with the first interview conducted with Anna and ending with Ian.

### **Anna**

Anna is a 25-year-old Caucasian, female martial artist who possesses the least amount of experience practicing the martial arts in terms of number of years practiced compared to the other participants. Anna's relationship to me is as a former student of mine and began her

journey of the martial arts in the class that I teach. She was eager and willing to share her experience with me and become a part of the study.

*I was raised in a competitive household, music was my way to stand out. Music became my career and so sports, especially soccer, took a back seat. Before I left for college my boyfriend wanted me to learn something for self-defense, he tried to teach me from his limited self-taught experience. I didn't like it. The primary thing that turned me off from martial arts and what he was trying to teach me was the striking aspects, especially the being struck component. I moved for school and then moved again and felt like I needed to take a class just for myself. I knew I wanted something physical to do and the only PE courses that were left open that fit my schedule was judo. Since taking the class I have also began taking Brazilian jujitsu and training at the same dojo as my husband. I haven't practiced recently since having my first child but I plan to get back into it soon.*

*My practice of the martial arts has been empowering and confidence building. Through competition it has opened up my sporting side again. It has shown me that I can still foster that competitive side and passion as an adult and that it is not just for children. I have always been a teacher, I teach music, but I have been asked to teach some newer students at my dojo. There is a sense of responsibility to teach them properly and I feel that the sensei trusts me to teach. He recognizes that I know the fundamentals well enough to teach them, even though at times I have to stop and ask a higher ranked person to make sure I am not teaching them wrong. I didn't think I would feel comfortable teaching the techniques until I began to teach and I was like, oh yeah I got this.*

*As far as identifying as an advanced martial artist, I think there is an intermediate stage before advanced and that is where I am at. I feel that my techniques have changed from broken and jagged to smooth and I no longer feel like a beginner. When I was able to apply what I learned in a tournament I really felt like a judoka. Talking about the martial arts with others who practice I feel like not a beginner because I can speak with them about the technique that I have learned. However, I know there is still so much more to learn and practice before I am advanced. Falling is very important, I've used it twice outside of the dojo and one of those times was during my pregnancy, it saved me and my child.*

*My philosophy of the martial arts is that it is empowering and builds confidence. There are different types of martial arts and you need to find the one that is right for you. If you don't find one that is right for you that's okay too, it is not for everyone. It should be fun.*

The Table representing Anna's themes, categories, and sub-categories for this vignette are found in Table 4.

## **Boomer**

Boomer is a 36-year-old Caucasian, male martial artist who shared his story of practicing the martial arts at his home surrounded by mountains and chickens. Boomer is a personal friend of mine, but unlike Anna, we have never had a student-teacher relationship. When asked he was

Table 4 Anna's Themes, Categories, and Sub-categories

Theme[T]	Categories [C]	Sub-Categories [s]
[T] Change Over Time = Transformation		
	[C] Confidence	[s] Beginner vs. Intermediate vs. Advanced [s] Through competition and application
	[C] Empowering	[s] Foundation and Application [s] Teaching/Giving Back
	[C] Remembering/Re-opening of self	
	[C] Proper Fit of Martial Art	
	[C] Fun	
	[C] Interaction with the other	

more than willing to participate.

*I was bullied growing up and feeling helpless, I didn't like that. I wanted to change and thought I'm going to be a ninja! My experience of the martial arts has been a rollercoaster. My beginning experience was shoddy at times but eventually I found a place to call home. But everything changes, everything moves, and it's natural if a bit sad.*

*I am a wanderer, I don't have a primary place I practice but I know if a place is right to train at, it feels right. The teacher matters the most thought and they must be genuine in their teaching and modeling, passionate for their practice and students, and love what they do. If they inspire you, you will devote your time to them and the martial arts.*

*My practice is a conversation with my partners. It is just in a different form from what most people think of as conversations. It occurs through the body and the interaction of my body with my partners. My practice in the past meant family, a sense of belonging, forming bonds, and brotherhood. Now it means self-protection, self-care, having fun, and teaching. It's just not the same as it was, something has changed and it's natural.*

*Talking about my practice is a beautiful thing but I sometimes talk in riddles. I can't just hold their hand forever, you understand better when you learn and I have to let people learn on their own. You can't quite explain it, it's like you can explain it but they won't get it until it actually happens, until they do it.*

*As an advanced martial artist I am capable and confident in my abilities to know that the martial arts is more than just fighting. It's about being humble, teaching, and learning.*

*My philosophy of the martial arts is a way of life. It's like learning your career. It becomes a part of who you are, there's no way around it. It engulfs you. It's learning how to walk again, learning how to be fluid, learning the dynamics of opposites, lifelong learning. It's dialogue with someone just in a different form. It's just hard to explain because sometimes it's scary, sometimes it's fun, and sometimes it's sad. It's everywhere but it's also a good life*

*learning school of thought. It's like going to church, it's everything, learning life skills, and it's a wonderful thing. It's what you make of it.*

The Table representing Boomer's themes, categories, and sub-categories for this vignette are found in Table 5.

Table 5 Boomer's Themes, Categories, and Sub-categories

Theme[T]	Categories [C]	Sub-Categories [s]
[T] Change Over Time (wanting through learning)	[C] Learning [C] Qualities of a teacher [C] Must Do It	[s] Bodily experience [s] Conversation with the body
[T] Time	[C] Confidence [C] Humble [C] Teaching [C] Giving back	[s] Imposter Syndrome: Not feeling qualified until doing it
	[C] Way of Life	[s] In everything [s] What you make of it
	[C] Then vs. Now	

## Christine

Christine is a 31-year-old Caucasian, female martial artist who brings her martial arts skills into her work. I was fortunate to recruit Christine through an in-person meeting with a local dojo (martial art school). The head instructor recommended that I reach out to her and she was the only participant from that dojo.

*I needed to relieve stress from work, work on my aggression, and begin to not feel like a victim anymore. The martial arts gave me that outlet. However, early on I had to fight against the stereotype of being a small female in a male dominated activity, I still have to fight. The martial arts and my practice partners have accepted me over time, practice, dedication, blood, sweat, and tears. My rank and dedication has been recognized by others and offers me respect. However, there is a responsibility that comes with it to control my body and others, especially new female and male students, appropriately.*

*My practice is still a way to relieve stress but I continue to learn every day. I am humble to know I don't know everything and that I need to keep practicing to reach the level of those I look up to. The martial arts has instilled a confidence in me, a mentality that I am prepared for the worse and that I will not be a victim again. I don't need to prove myself but I will if I need to. The practice of the martial arts shows up in the little things at work and in the day to day. When I practice I learn, it's a safety net, a bubble and safe place where I am respected and in turn give respect. I am welcome as a person in a male dominated sport and practice. My gender is still an issue outside of the practice and to those who do not practice martial arts.*

*I am not an advanced student, I am intermediate. I know there is more to learn and more I have to practice.*

The Table representing Christine's themes, categories, and sub-categories for this vignette are found in Table 6.

Table 6 Christine's Themes, Categories, and Sub-categories

Theme[T]	Categories [C]	Sub-Categories [s]
[T] Change Over Time = Transformation	[C] Catharsis	
	[C] Confidence	
	[C] Victim moving to Not a Victim	
	[C] Preparation and Application	
	[C] Aggression and Stress Relief moving to Stress Relief and Fun	
	[C] Respect and Recognition for others and from others	
		[s] Gender and Non-Gender
[T] Gender		

## Derrick

Derrick is a 35-year-old Caucasian, male martial artist whose practice of Aikido permeates throughout his life. Like Christine, Derrick was a result of an in-person meeting with his sensei (teacher), at his dojo. Derrick was unique because he came to the interview with prepared material, his thoughts about what he was going to say that were formed the morning of our meeting.

*The seeds were planted throughout my life. My father was a judo instructor but the first intentional step was asking a friend, whom I respected, about martial arts in town. I had two choices and the exposure of aikido through a Discovery Channel program led me down that path. I remember watching the movements and marveling at them, imagining myself doing the same fluid, big, circular movements and not I cannot distinguish my early practice of aikido from my imagined self.*

*My sensei is like my father and someone whom I feel I should model my life after, which has had a transformative effect. My journey has been to understand myself from the outside, from the perspective of the other, my partner. I continue to study much out of habit but also to find something new within the repetition.*

*Talking about aikido should be able to occur while doing aikido, a centered quietness where our true opinions are discovered. It is all one and you can use your words for whatever you wish but I don't think that when I do aikido I am able to reflect upon it.*

*As an advanced student I have a solid foundation of the core techniques and falls. I also have more liberties and responsibilities to take care of my partner, especially while teaching. I have a responsibility to dedicate myself to my practice and give back to my dojo and sensei. As a beginner it was chaos but as time passed and movement, change, occurred it has become order. I am still learning but have reached milestones that let me catch my breath before proceeding further. These milestones are components of a bigger machine which you don't have to worry about if it works, it works without you because it becomes a part of you. These milestones and my practice give me confidence that I am prepared for what might happen. I am comfortable enough to feel I don't have anything to prove because I know the limitations of myself better.*

*In regards to teaching it is a battle, a struggle with change. Do I repeat the words as I was taught from my sensei or do I help them find their own way and new understanding of aikido? However difficult the struggle teaching has a special meaning for me, it is the language of my thoughts.*

*My practice now is a way to slow down my thoughts, a way to find new meaning in repetition. It teaches self-control, an understanding of the energies of life. The interactions through practice show me how to learn and live, I enjoy living better and see it as an effort of curiosity.*

The Table representing Derrick's themes, categories, sub-categories, and variations for this vignette are found in Table 7.

Table 7 Derrick's Themes, Categories, Sub-categories, and Variations

Theme[T]	Categories [C]	Sub-Categories [s]	Variations [v]
[T] Movement = Change			
[T] Change Over time = Transformation			
	[C] Journey	[s] Milestones	
			[v] Embodied Learning
			[v] Core Techniques (Body)
			[v] Ukemi (Body)
			[v] Relationship with others (Body, Mind, and Spirit)
			[v] Dedication (Time)

## Eric

Eric is a 40-year-old, male martial artist whose practice of many different types of martial arts has always led him back to Uechi-Ryu. Eric was also a recruit from an in-person meeting with the sensei of a local dojo. He is one of two participants that volunteered to share their story with me.

*I grew up watching the original karate kid, I loved those movies. My biological father knew my first sensei through being in the army. I say biological father because he abused my mother and I tried to defend her when I was 7. My sensei is more of a father to me. He made me, shaped me into who I am. He was someone I could look up to, someone I could trust. He taught me values of self-discipline, self-confidence, respect, and respect for others.*

*My practice of the martial arts completes me, it's my way of life. It includes everything that life is, encases everything you know. It is personal, different to everybody. Showing my experience just shows what I can do, illustrating what people think the martial arts are. Unless you sit down and talk with them you never know what martial arts means to someone, it's always different. But in everything I do there is a reason for it based on something I learned in martial arts.*

*I have practiced a lot of different martial arts and it is the instructor that is important, not the style. The sensei is the most important aspect of my martial art. A good teacher doesn't teach for money and they practice what they preach. There are values that they embody and you can feel it, you just know.*



*I've been practicing for 35 years but I still see myself as a beginner because I am always learning. As an advanced student I am passionate and dedicated to my practice. Teaching and giving back, being asked and trusted by my sensei to take the responsibility to teach, to pass on my knowledge is how I know I am an advanced student. Another way I feel advanced is that I don't have to prove anything. I have learned to live with walking away from confrontation. I know respect for others, for yourself, for the earth, that there are things more important in life than who won a fight. As an advanced student I realize that the most useful part of the martial arts are not the kicking and punching but something small you don't see, you start seeing what it is really for. Also the most important aspect of being an advanced student is asking questions, seeking knowledge and knowing that you have to do this. You don't need martial arts to learn to fight.*

*If you are not in martial arts it is hard to understand. Western media exposure leads to stereotypes which can be good to bring more people in but also bad because to those who don't practice it is difficult to understand without comparing it to other western sports.*

*Ukemi is important!*

*I have a philosophy of life and it probably comes from my martial arts but also being Indian, a lot of that plays a role in that. Our religion is more spiritual versus religious in just the way that we should treat everything. Treating yourself, our earth and people with respect that it deserves. There is no best style of martial arts, it depends. However, the best martial art should be enjoyable, you should get the most out of it and you should be able to use it effectively.*

The Table representing Eric's themes, categories, and sub-categories for this vignette are found in Table 8.

## **Frank**

Frank is a 24-year-old, male martial artist whose story brought to mind the image of a rollercoaster during my interpretation which I noted in my research journal. Frank came to the study through a flyer that I had posted at the dojo he trains at, with the permission of their sensei and owner.

*I was initially interested in the martial arts because my father taught it and I was interested in what he did. Around 9 or 10 years old I was respected, being asked to show people techniques. I won a lot of tournaments and championships but they began to feel hollow, like I was just going through the motions. I fell off of it, drifted away from the martial arts and my family. I began to hang out with bad people. My father reached out and asked for help with a tournament, I agreed. I met old friends there and I was just real honest with them, they said things would change for me soon. I got into jujitsu and couldn't get enough of it, I couldn't practice enough days during the week. It's everything. It's what I'm going to do for the rest of my life, it gave me so much traction from the point that I was at to where I am not. I wouldn't be the same person. I don't know what I would be doing right now if I wasn't involved with jujitsu. It brought me back full round. It's opened up a whole other set of life choices.*



Table 8 *Eric's Themes, Categories, and Sub-categories*

Theme[T]	Categories [C]	Sub-Categories [s]
[T] Change Over Time = Transformation		
[T] Sensei is most important		
	[C] Values	
		[s] Discipline
		[s] Confidence
		[s] Respect
[T] RESPECT		
[T] Way of life		
[T] Giving Back		
	[C] Passionate	
	[C] Dedicated	
	[C] Teaching	
	[C] Modeling	
[T] Ask Questions		
[T] Learning		
[T] Media		
	[C] Western, Non-traditional sport vs. Eastern, traditional, other	

*As an advanced martial artist I have a passion and dedication for it. This is all I'm good at. I feel that I'm not a teacher but a serious student. Being a serious student means to care, to really care, not to be there for the rank or the time but to be there because you want to be there. Being an advanced martial artist means you have to let go of your ego. You're helping other people prosper, guiding them on their path. You take that responsibility to help and give back to the martial art.*

*My practice of the martial arts is therapy in the greatest sense. It has given me such a passion that I want to give back to it. It has given me a greater love for family, respect for myself and other people. It has instilled confidence and joy, just even in the darkest times just joy. It is belonging to something that nobody else can be a part of unless they know. It is a sense of wonder, like being a little kid again. It is my rags to riches story and I am wealthy.*

The Table representing Frank's themes and categories for this vignette are found in Table 9.

Table 9 Frank's Themes and Categories

Theme[T]	Categories [C]
[T] Change Over Time = Transformative	
[T] It's everything	[C] Passion [C] Confidence [C] Joy [C] Love [C] Respect [C] Belonging [C] Responsibility
[T] Full Round	

## Greg

Greg is a 43-year-old Caucasian, male martial artist who began to practice as a teenager but lost touch as life happened, only to find it again later in life. Greg is a student at the same dojo that Eric was recruited from. Greg was contacted through texts and e-mails, separate from the face-to-face contact that Eric was recruited through.

*I grew up in a rough neighborhood, being small and having a smart mouth rewarded me with being beaten up and bullied. My dad was a boxer and taught me how to use my hands to defend myself. But during one situation a police officer witnessed what happened and encouraged me to take karate where he trained. Initially it was just physical training and I really enjoyed it. It was something different that no one else was doing. I was 16 when I started and I was about to test for my black belt at 19 when life happened. I went off to college, got a job, got married, and moved all over the U.S., but I never lost my training, I kept it with me, occasionally practicing by myself.*

*About a year and a half ago stress from work, a new baby, and moving again made me think I needed to revisit my karate and it led me to my current school.*

*To me the person teaching the martial art is the most important aspect. My sensei was a legend and I didn't realize it until I had left. He was a really important part of my kind of growth as a person. I am thankful for my current teacher because he understands where I came from. He and my sensei model what the martial arts means and you know it, you feel it, if this is the right place for you, they live the values I expect to see in the martial arts.*

*If I had to list those values they would be: humility, respect for the system, respect for your classmates and teachers, physical and spiritual strength to endure, resilience, loyalty to your practice, upholding traditions, being altruistic, and living it in the day to day.*

*Living these values of the martial arts in the day to day means having an obligation when you are able and capable of helping somebody who maybe can't help themselves in certain situations. Sticking up for somebody who can't stick up for themselves, that's a big part for me. I'm going to help somebody else who can't help themselves that way and some of it is in the respect. Living it in the day to day also means having humility to not need a trophy for doing the right thing. It also means having the confidence to do the right thing, to say okay this is wrong and I can step in and say something. Living in the day to day means taking your values and putting them into action and that's what I think any martial arts can do for you, it just gives you the confidence to do the right thing when it is hard.*

*To be able to live in the day to day as an advanced martial artist I need to balance three key components: body, mind, and spirit. Being an advanced martial artist is having a respect for these different components. When I started out it was all about focusing on my body and I feel that is the case for many younger students or novice students. Novice means that you are needing to train one or more of these three areas more, that one of them is neglected or lacking. The mind is typically the toughest for a lot of people. You need to accept the tenants of the teaching but it's how you and what you take from it, it's how you learn from it. In this day and age the spirituality is probably tougher than it used to be. A lot of people assume that spirituality means religion but I would describe it as inner strength. As I progressed and continue to progress I felt a transformation. The parts that I kept up with are the breathing and repetitive nature of the empty mind practices, it evolved for me. My practice became less focused on the body, even though I maintained myself, and more of a retreat from the pressures and stress in my life, the spiritual piece has become more important for me. It is a way for me to find peace in these really difficult situations.*

*Being an advanced martial artist also means dedication to practice, humility and not having to prove you are the best. It means showing the respect for it and then living in the day to day. It also means guiding, teaching, and giving back. You really can't be a master until you're a teacher, if you're not willing to share, if you're not willing to pass on what you know and teach, you're probably not willing to learn. When you got to that level it's not about letting everybody else know how good you are, it's about sharing with everybody else.*

The Table representing Greg's themes, categories, sub-categories, and variations for this vignette are found in Table 10.

## **Helen**

Helen is a 67-year-old Caucasian/Western European, female martial artist whose story of practicing Tai Chi was shared with me during her interview at her office. Helen was recruited through a flyer that I had posted in one of the many dojos and gyms that I visited to recruit

Table 10 *Greg's Themes, Categories, Sub-categories, and Variations*

Theme[T]	Categories [C]	Sub-Categories [s]	Variations [v]
[T] Change Over Time = Transformation			
[T] Embodiment	[C] Body, Mind, and Spirit	[s] Balance [s] Respect	[v] Style [v] Self [v] Others
		[s] Confidence [s] Practice [s] Humility [s] Way of Life: Living in the day to day	
[T] Interaction	[C] Giving Back [C] Lineage [C] Teaching/Guiding [C] Values into action: Obligation to help others		
[T] Stress Relief	[C] Retreat [C] A way to find peace		

participants. Helen also graciously demonstrated part of her martial art during the interview, which will be discussed later in Chapter Five.

*I'm still active but I began having pain in my knees. A colleague from work, who practiced tai chi, thought I might enjoy it...and he was right! It was the right fit for me at the time, it was convenient, began after work, and I don't know if I would have started if it wasn't. It reduced my stress levels because I couldn't think about anything else other than the movements when I practiced. It is moving meditation, just focusing on these moves and trying to get your body to do these things. I was just looking for a gentle exercise. I did not know I was going to get so much more out of it. It was a hit with me right away, I really enjoyed it.*

*However, I was very shy about it at first. It was different from things that people typically did in this part of the country. It wasn't a mainstream thing like tennis or golf. It was very exotic, very different from anything I had ever been exposed to. I was very private about it, I would not have wanted people to know that I was doing it. I wasn't ready to reveal myself, I didn't want to be laughed at. Even practicing at home only happened when I knew no one could possibly see me.*

*Now I brag about doing it. It doesn't bother me in the least now. Western culture doesn't know how to react to things that are different and so they ridicule, but now I can tolerate that and actually I look at that and don't care, I feel you don't know what you are missing. If you only knew what I had you'd be envious of me instead of laughing at me. However, there are still some aspects of it that I keep to myself.*

*My style of tai chi has four aims: making tai chi available to all, promoting the health benefits of tai chi, promoting cultural exchange, and doing good works in the community. These four things are bigger than just learning how to do the sets and being mechanical about it. It means improvement of the body and the dual cultivation of the mind and the body. I have become more tolerant of myself, I like myself better and I enjoy the world more because of the exposure to things I was uncomfortable with. I'm less obsessive, more relaxed and it definitely convinces me of the duality of working on the mind and body as one.*

*I'm glad someone was talking about it, this experience, because I was looking for it, I was anticipating, I was hoping to find it. But you can't really force it, its floor time, practice, that makes the experience come. You can talk about it but it's meaningless until you get there.*

*As an advanced student I feel I have matured enough in my practice to feel internal movements and massage. It's not necessarily time that makes someone advanced. I have exposed myself to the practice, taken it upon myself to practice, and in my sense of obligation as an instructor I have an additional responsibility to make sure I understand and grasp it as well as I can. My practice is not a burden but a commitment that I want to nurture and take care of. Tai chi to me now means staying centered, staying balanced, and all of these have double meanings. They mean the physical aspects of the sets but also how to live your life, the yin and yang, equal opposite. Master Moi would say virtually anything you do, you're doing tai chi. It means you have patience with yourself and with each other. Openness to new ways of doing things. Welcoming change not just tolerating it. Taking care of each other and enjoyment. I feel like tai chi is everywhere. The tools associated with meditation allow you to: quiet your mind, see yourself, see what is important, see what is not important, and see how to treat people. It affects my family, work, and recreational life, my values, and what I care about. Tai chi has exposed me to different ways of thinking and broadened my interest in being around people that*

*are different from me, I look for people that are different from me and enrich myself so very much.*

*I just think how incredibly fortunate I am that this fell into my lap. It hasn't made me a good person necessarily, it's made me a better person than I was.*

The Table representing Helen's themes, categories, sub-categories, and variations for this vignette are found in Table 11.

## **Ian**

Ian is a 27-year-old Caucasian, male martial artist whose practice is one of the most important aspects of his life at this moment in time. Like Ana, Ian is also a former student of mine. He now helps with the instruction of the classes that I teach as well as continuing his journey through other teachers of the martial arts.

*It started with TV shows that I watched as a kid. They would do all these martial arts things and I loved it. Eventually a karate school opened in my hometown and it snowballed from there. It began as a desire to do the things I saw on TV. Later it became more about an idea I had of the martial artist I wanted to be. I gained a better understanding of the martial arts through time and practice and it has helped me develop a more realistic understanding of the martial arts. I still want to get to that goal and it's a long way off so I have to keep going until I get there and I probably never will.*

*Right now the martial arts is probably one of the most important parts of my life. It is a huge amount of my social interaction and one of the only things I can always feel a little change in. It varies from practice to practice, usually a slight change in technique, perspective, or thought processes. I need more experience before I'm capable of being a good instructor but I'm past my first 100 steps. I'm a serious student, not a teacher. I can freely admit that I have a bit more limited experience than others who identify as advanced martial artists. But I am continuing to grow that experience, I have an intense desire to know more and keep learning. I'm an advanced martial artist because I'm going to keep learning, I'm going to expand my knowledge base, and I'm going to expand my experience no matter what. As an advanced martial artist I have begun to make the decision that this is probably going to be something that I keep with me for the rest of my life.*

*There wasn't one specific event where I realized I was an advanced martial artist but more like a series of moments. Times where I was able to surprise others I had competed against and they recognized the change in me. Outside of the dojo I catch myself going through motions. I'm very wound up and the martial arts helps me unwind mentally so that I am more relaxed when I practice. It's starting to bleed through a little bit at a time, I don't get so wound up outside of practice and its small changes. I know the difference, I can see the difference between the person I was before I started practicing regularly and the person that I am having practiced regularly. I can feel a sense of control.*

Table 11 *Helen's Themes, Categories, Sub-categories, and Variations*

Theme[T]	Categories [C]	Sub-Categories [s]	Variations [v]
[T] Embodied Learning = [Change over (Time+Practice)] = Transformation	[C] Shy to Open [C] Before to now	[s] East vs. West [s] Fit-ness	[v] Against stereotypes [v] Other ways of knowing [v] Everywhere [v] Way of life
	[C] Interaction with self and other [C] Transformation [C] Embodiment	[s] Body 1 <sup>st</sup> [s] Mind and Body Together	[v] Dual cultivation [v] Inseparable
[T] Advanced Martial Artist	[C] Time is not enough [C] Responsibility [C] Commitment [C] Dedication [C] Patience with self and others [C] Stress Relief [C] Welcoming change [C] Enjoyment	[s] Teaching and Giving Back [s] Openness	



*There are three values that I believe the martial arts instills and requires from you: discipline, humility, and honesty. The martial arts will and should instill discipline in you but you also have to bring that discipline into your practice. Humility is instilled through good schools, teachers, and people, because there are going to be people that are better than you.*

*You have to be honest with what you can do, with what your martial arts can do, and with what martial arts as a whole can do. My practice of the martial arts went from I want to do these flying kicks and other things I saw in TV and movies to understanding that's not what the martial arts is for. So I went from a very delusional martial artist to now I can realistically do some pretty amazing stuff physically but it's not the same as the stuff on TV that requires wires and animation.*

*My philosophy of the martial arts is for me and me alone, everyone has different reasons for practicing and my reasons should not dictate someone else's practice. I see my practice as a need for self-betterment, a constant need to find improvement in myself. A lot of people approach the martial arts as a way to make themselves stronger over other people, that's the wrong way to look at it. The only person that I'm stronger than is the guy I was yesterday. As long as I'm better than the man that woke up the day before I'm moving forward and that to me is the only way I can approach the martial arts.*

*The martial arts gives me the chance to be a lot more of myself and to express myself a bit more openly and I think everyone can benefit from that. The only way that I can help the rest of the world to feel that is to be responsible for helping others learn. If we don't teach more people eventually the martial arts will die. You can't have martial arts without students, you can't have it without people wanting to learn and I need to make sure that there are going to be people after me learning this stuff for themselves so that they can eventually move on and help other people. I need to make sure my training continues and that I can grow as a martial artist but I can't do that alone. No one should train in a bubble, no one should train for themselves. There's so much that comes from personal perception and personal views of the world and it's very easy for us to think that that is the only way to see the world. There are only a few things I think that can change that, that can make a person understand that there are lots of different ways to see the world. Martial arts to be is honestly one of the easiest ways to do it. I genuinely believe that martial arts helps people see other people's perspectives.*

The Table representing Ian's themes, categories, and sub-categories for this vignette are found in Table 12.

The preceding section of Phase Three contained vignettes of each participants' narrative. These were short and condensed versions of the entire interviews and are provided for the reader to better understand the participants' journeys. The direct quotes used later in this chapter will come from the interview transcripts of the participants and will be the exact words of the participants, although the vignettes are constructed entirely from the participants' own words as



Table 12 *Ian's Themes, Categories, and Sub-categories*

Theme[T]	Categories [C]	Sub-Categories [s]
[T] Change over (Time+Expeirence) = Transformation	[C] Before vs. After [C] Movement vs. Stagnation [C] Responsibility [C] Continuing to grow	[s] Desire [s] Learning
	[C] Rest of my life [C] Series of moments	[s] Recognition
	[C] Self-Betterment [C] Western Media	[s] Delusion vs. Reality
	[C] Discipline [C] Humility [C] Honesty [C] Respect	
[T] Teaching/Giving Back		
[T] Other		
[T] Interaction		
[T] Communication		
	[C] Other Ways of Knowing	

well. Each vignette was designed to also capture the feel and personality of the participant and how we co-constructed the narrative. This concept of co-constructing the narrative was discussed in Chapters One and Three. The concept is compatible with the study's focus on other-ways-of-knowing, especially embodiment. In order to co-construct the narrative with the participant, I was tasked with remaining present in the moment, reacting to not only what was said but how it was said as well. The body language used by both the participant and I were elements that aided in the creation of a dialogic relationship during the interview. My researcher's journal was an incredible resource to accomplish this task, where I was able to write down initial thoughts as I recounted the interaction with the participant immediately afterwards. Through this process I was better able to immerse myself in the story that we created rather than standing outside of the experience analyzing the data. Accompanying each vignette, a table was provided that shows the themes, categories, sub-categories, and variations that were unique to their narratives and form the basis for the next phases of this analysis.

#### **Phase Four: Review of Data**

Phase four of Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phase model promotes reviewing the themes that have been generated through the three previous phases. This review in their model is broken down into two levels of refining the themes. The first level is reviewing the themes that have been generated. This means reading the collated extracts and long segments that the themes emerged from and considering if there is a coherent pattern that emerges. Phase four blends well with the comprehensive narrative thematic analysis allowing for the story that forms to be grounded within the context of where it originally came from, instead of being some abstract segment of text floating in the ether. If the review leads to identifying coherent patterns in the themes, then moving to the second level is recommended. There refining of the themes begins.

This refinement is similar to the process of review, but it is applied to the entire data set. This was an iterative process due to the nature of how the data were collected and analyzed, building off of each subsequent interview. This phase also assisted with identifying themes that were missed during earlier coding stages and earlier interviews.

To begin this phase I took the themes, categories, and sub-categories from each participant's data and created a Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet (a selection has been chosen to illustrate this spreadsheet in Table 13) listing out each code into its own cell.

I then took the codes and went back to each participant's data in order to review if this code was representative of the section of data that it came from. This required a further immersion into the data once again yielding a deeper understanding of the narrative. Following the example in Table 14, Frank's code of *It's Everything* stems from a segment of text in response to the interview question of: What does your practice of the martial arts mean to you? His response was,

*“it's right now I'm solely focused on jujitsu really and grappling and **it's everything**. It's what I'm going to do for the rest of my life...it gave me so much traction from the point that I was at to where I am now, yeah...I wouldn't be the same person.”* (Frank)

His phrase of “*it's everything*” stuck out to me because of the other stories he told about the martial arts being a way of life and that it was what he was “*going to do for the rest of my life*”. This concept resonated strongly with my personal experience and that of the other participants in this study. The stories that Frank chose to relay to me supported this code and reaffirmed my selection of this as a strong code for his narrative.

Another example from Table 14 comes from Helen's codes of *Everywhere*. Her segment of data that generated this code came in response to my interview question of: Are there

Table 13 *Example of Spreadsheet data*

<b>Frank</b>	<b>Helen</b>
Change over Time = Transformation	Embodied Learning = Change over Time + Practice = Transformation
It's Everything	Shy to Open
Passion	Before to Now
Confidence	East vs. West
Joy	Fit-ness
Love	Against Stereotypes
Respect	Other Ways of Knowing
Belonging	Everywhere
Responsibility	Way of Life
Full Round	Interaction with self and other Transformation Embodiment Body 1 <sup>st</sup>

Table 14 *Condensed Table*

Themes, Categories, and Sub-Categories			
Change	Embodied Learning/Embodiment	Interaction	Way of Life
Then vs. Now or Before vs. After Time and: Practice, Other, Experience, Movement	1 Body	Other and Self	Living the Day to Day
	2 Mind and Spirit *Also East vs. West	Recognition	Values
	Inseparable but	Excludes	
	Order Matters	Gender *See Outliers	Passion
	Varying	East vs. West *See	
	Degrees	Embodied Learning	Identity
	Other Ways of	Other Ways of	
	Knowing	Knowing	Stress Relief
	Practice	Dialogue	Fit-ness
	Must Do It	Other as Teacher	Giving Back
	Application	Most Important	Honesty
	Experience		
	Matters	Modeling	Respect
		Values *See	
	Imposter	Embodied Learning	
	Syndrome	and Way of Life	
	Values	Lineage	
	Discipline	Teaching	
	Empowering		
	Balance		
	Way to Find		
	Peace		
	Relationships		
	Humility		
	Responsibility		
	Patience and		
	Respect for others		

any instances where your practice of Tai Chi shows up in your life outside of the training hall?

Helen's response was,

*“Well I feel like it's **everywhere**. Not as practiced in it as I need to be but the society includes meditation and so the tools associated with meditation are very helpful, I think that they quiet your mind, it enables you to quiet your mind and see yourself and see what's important and see what's not important and how to treat people so I think it affects my family life, I think it affects my work life and recreational life, the things that appeal to me, my values, what I care about. So I think that it's exposed me to lots of ideas from what I had been exposed to and so it meshed well with things that were happening at work.” (Helen)*

Similar to Frank's example, going back to the data and reassessing the code in relation to the segment of data that it came from was reaffirming that I had selected the correct code to capture the participant's experience. This phase also allowed me to honor the comprehensive narrative thematic analysis that I laid out in Chapter Three. I was able to review the codes in regard to the situated context that they came out of and consider the narrative aspects of the code in relation to the participant's story.

The next step in this phase was to refine the themes across the entire data set. Using the spreadsheet I had created allowed me to spread out all of the themes, codes, and categories in order to view them as a complete set. Once they were laid out I began the process of refinement by color coding like or similar codes across the data corpus. As connections from one participant's narrative to another began to form I noticed that many of the connections were interconnected, not coded solely with one color. Many of these codes possessed two, three, or even four colors indicating that they were a part of multiple larger sets of data. For example, the codes of confidence, respect, and responsibility all possessed three different sets of themes that they were a part of across each participant that exhibited this code. In contrast embodiment as an individual code was color coded as only a single color and did not exist across codes in other themes, but was viewed as connecting to other themes, which will be expanded in the next phase.

From this point I continued the refinement process by arranging the themes and categories into a more structured format in which the codes that I termed as *values* were analyzed further pairing down the themes and categories into the final format of themes, categories, sub-categories, and variations within sub-categories. This format is represented in a condensed thematic color-coded table (see Table 14) that does not include the variations. And finally, here is the expanded list format that includes the variations, which rounds out phase four.

**Theme: Change**

**Category: Time and Experience**

**Sub-Category: Then vs. Now or Before vs. After**

**Sub-Category: Time and Practice**

**Sub-Category: Time and Other**

**Sub-Category: Time and Movement**

**Theme: Embodied Learning/Embodiment**

**Category: #1 Body**

**Category: #2 Mind and Spirit \*See East vs. West**

**Sub-Category: Order Matters but Inseparable**

**Sub-Category: All Trained at the Same Time to Varying Degrees**

**Category: Other Ways of Knowing**

**Sub-Category: Experience Matters/Practice/Must Do It**

**Sub-Category: Application**

**Sub-Category: Imposter Syndrome**

**Category: Values**

**Sub-Category: Discipline**

**Variations: Passion, Commitment, Dedication**

**Sub-Category: Empowering**

**Variations: Confidence, Respect for Self**

**Sub-Category: Balance**

**Variations: Welcoming Change, Openness**

**Sub-Category: Way to Find Peace**

**Variations: Stress Relief, Catharsis, Retreat**

**Sub-Category: Relationships**

**Variations: Enjoyment, Joy, Fun, Love, Belonging**

**Sub-Category: Humility**

**Variation: Honesty**

**Sub-Category: Responsibility**

**Variations: Learning, Obligation**

**Theme: Interaction****Category: Other and Self****Sub-Category: Recognition By and From****Sub-Category: Excludes Gender \*See Outlier****Category: East vs. West \*See Embodied Learning****Category: Other Ways of Knowing****Sub-Category: Dialogue****Category: Other as Teacher****Sub-Category: Most Important****Sub-Category: Modeling****Sub-Category: Lineage****Sub-Category: Teaching****Category: Values \*See Themes: Embodiment and Way of Life****Theme: Way of Life****Category: Living the Day to Day****Category: Values****Sub-Category: Passion****Variations: Commitment, Dedication, Discipline, Desire****Sub-Category: Identity****Variations: Confidence, Empowering, Foundation, Self-Betterment****Sub-Category: Stress Relief****Variation: Catharsis****Sub-Category: Fit-ness****Variations: Fun, Joy, Love, Belonging****Sub-Category: Giving Back****Variations: Teaching, Learning, Responsibility****Sub-Category: Honesty****Variations: Humility, Openness****Sub-Category: Respect****Variation: Patience**

Phase four involved multiple levels of refinement of the results from the three previous phases. This refinement extended beyond the individual participants narratives to examine the themes that emerged in relation to all of the participants' narratives. This refinement resulted in the preceding expanded list of the four themes, as well as the categories, sub-categories, and variations that support the themes. The next phase is concerned with naming and defining the themes that have emerged from this phase's refinement process.



### **Phase Five: Define and Name Themes**

Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis led to the list format of themes, categories, sub-categories, and variations presented in phase four. Phase five focuses on naming and defining the themes that have emerged as a result of this process. Although the themes, categories, sub-categories, and variations seem hierarchical and separated they are anything but. In this phase Braun and Clarke (2006) recommend moving beyond simple paraphrasing and attempting to "identify what is interesting about them and why" (p. 22). This entails providing extracts from the transcripts that support the definitions and names given to the themes that have been selected up to this phase of the analysis. This phase describes the themes, including the categories and subcategories contained within each theme, providing data for support of the theme. Each theme ends with a definition for that theme, which incorporates the essence of the categories and sub-categories that compose it. The definitions are derived from my understanding of the co-constructed narratives that were created through the interviews, which resulted in the expanded lists of four overarching themes, categories, and sub-categories.

#### **Theme: Change**

Change was the most consistent theme to emerge from the participant's stories. It was evident from each participant's story that there was a fundamental change or transformation that took place through their experience of practicing the martial arts, although the participants made no distinction between the differences of the terms and used them interchangeably. Change is typically expressed through elements of becoming comfortable with and understanding themselves. A couple of examples of this are Frank's segment talking about "*I wouldn't be the same person*", and Helen's segment expressing "*I've become more tolerant of myself...I like myself better*". The theme of change was also supported by one category of *Time and*

*Experience* and four sub-categories or types of change. Those sub-categories are: (a) *Then vs. Now or Before vs. After*, (b) *Time and Practice*, (c) *Time and Other*, (d) and *Time and Movement*.

**Time and Experience.** The sub-category of *Time and Experience* are central to the theme of *Change*. This category was evident in each interview and is further developed into the four sub-categories based on the unique qualities inherent in each participant's experience. The change that took place in the narratives embodied an element of time and an experience that was connected with each participant's progression through time in relation to their practice of the martial arts. Anna's narrative showed this category through her experience of doing two tournaments in rapid succession.

*“doing that helped me get a better idea of like okay this is what it's like to be in a tournament....so a month later when I did the (name omitted) judo tournament...I felt a lot more confident and applying what I had been learning and I think that's when I started being like I'm a Judoka, like a little bit...I started feeling like okay I think I might know a little bit about what I'm doing.”* (Anna)

Eric's narrative speaks to this category through his many years of experience and broad range of different martial arts he has practiced.

*“I'm 40, I've been studying since the age of 6...I have studied seven different styles of martial arts...there comes a point when you realize...you walk in and you can tell whether or not it's a place you want to train. You can sense it, you can feel it, it doesn't take long talking to the instructor to know if they know what they're talking about, if they're going to share the values that you look for when you talk about martial arts.”* (Eric)

And Christine's narrative addresses this category of *Time and Experience* through becoming comfortable working through stressful situations and a move from training for fun to training for fun as well as with a purpose.

*“I had bad experiences in the past and so learning how to defend myself...initially it was exercise and this would be fun and stuff like that and it turned into this would be really useful if I'm in a bad situation again...one proponent that I'm really big on since I've been doing this so long is getting in a comfortable position with your male training partners so that when you're in an uncomfortable position you know what to do. It*

*becomes muscle memory and you know you're in a safe place training with these people who care about you."* (Christine)

***Then vs. Now or Before vs. After.*** *Then vs. Now or Before vs. After* as a sub-category is expressed through Ian and Helen's narratives. Ian related change as,

*"[A] desire...it began as a desire to be able to do the sorts of things that I saw in those TV shows, in those movies. I really wanted to be able to do those sorts of things...that was the initial time investment...Later on it became more about an idea I had of the martial artist I wanted to be. As I got a better understanding of what it meant to be a martial artist, as I sort of developed a more realistic view of what that meant it was still a goal and I kept wanting...I have to keep going until I get there"* (Ian)

Ian's language promoted the relevance of this category under the theme of change by highlighting a change in his idea of what it meant to be a martial artist before he practiced and after he practiced the martial arts.

Helen's narrative of change occurred as a move from being shy to expose herself as a martial artist to being open and even bragging about her practice and experience.

*"Well it wasn't really a mainstream thing for (name of city omitted) to practice Tai Chi. It wasn't like playing tennis or swimming, or golfing...I didn't know anything about it, I didn't know its history, I didn't know what underlying philosophy or beliefs...it was very exotic, very different from anything I had ever been exposed to or know anything about and experienced...I wasn't ready to reveal myself...very much less to the world that I was doing this, I guess I didn't want to be laughed at...I did eventually get over that and just let my husband laugh at me. And so it doesn't matter, it doesn't bother me in the least now."* (Helen)

***Time and Practice.*** *Time and Practice* as a sub-category under the theme of *Change* is represented prominently within the narrative of Greg. Greg's narrative about change as a result of time and practice is illustrated through his time of initial training and how it affects him now.

*"[I]t was really initially it was the physical aspect...So I spent...three and a half years in my high school years working my way through the program...I was pretty heavy into it at that time...about three months before I was scheduled to test, went off to college...never went back to it, never really lost it...then I don't know it was just sort of this last year and a half, stress at work...I had a new baby...so I had a lot of stuff going on in my life and I said you know I really need to...revisit the karate...when you're younger and this has been kind of a transformation for me, you think of it strictly as a self-defense method and*

*you're trying to fight for your life and protecting yourself or...some kids get into it for the wrong reasons...but as you get older the parts of it that I kind of kept up with in my mind are...the breathing, and the just the repetitive nature of the empty mind kind of exercise and it's evolved now for me.” (Greg)*

**Time and Other.** *Time and Other* as a sub-category under the theme of *Change* is best expressed through Boomer's narrative of bonds and relationships in relation to the question: What does the martial arts mean to you now?

*“[T]hat's actually a question I've been asking myself a lot lately...it depends on what stage I was in...when I was doing the Kung Fu there's like a sense of belonging cause it was like...you guys become like a big family...it's like you form bonds with these people...a brotherhood, working with all those people for so long...and that was huge to me back then and it's like but as time passes...people have...their lives get in the way, somebody has a baby, they lose interest, they whatever it is...those people that you've known for so long and start falling off...get fewer and fewer until it's like...you get this whole new crop of people that come in and it's like you remember when so and...then you kind of have those inside jokes kind of thing...that's a little heartbreaking sometimes...like those days are past but you still have to like it just becomes an endurance race by that point...like you just want to keep going...I still want to learn much more...it's not the same anymore and it's like never going to be the same, it's like life it's constantly changing, you're going to but you know it's you just gotta move on.” (Boomer)*

**Time and Movement.** *Time and Movement* as a sub-category under the theme of *Change* can be represented by Derrick's narrative and my own. Derrick's narrative expresses time and movement as a category of change in different places. The first place is in relation to the interview question of: What has the practice meant to you?

*“You're only as good as what you can understand about your opponent's abilities and intentions and your instructor knows the bounds of these attributes which is especially important to the uninitiated. That speaks more to my beginnings than it does my current training. Now I think I continue to study aikido much out of habit but not to repeat but to find something new within the repetition” (Derrick)*

The second comes from a prepared document that Derrick had written before the interview which collected his thoughts about his practice of the martial arts that day.

*“I’ve always found movement fascinating...Aikido fills in the mystery of movement to me. The range of movement of or bodies is linked to discussion of our limitations as humans or absence of as humans.” (Derrick)*

*Change* as an expression of *Time and Movement* also played an integral aspect in Ian’s narrative. His expression of movement through the martial arts over time is necessary to stave off what he feels is stagnation.

*“[H]onestly martial arts practice is probably one of the most important parts of my life as it stands...it’s one of the most important parts of my life right now. I get a huge amount of my social interaction through martial arts but more than that it is one of the only things that I can always feel some level of progress, that I can always feel some level of change. There are a lot of other things in my life right now that feel like they’re not changing like there’s no difference day to day, it’s just the same routine over and over again. And while there is a lot of repetition in my martial arts practice I still always come away feeling at least a little different there’s always a little change somewhere no matter how much or how little practice I get in a day as long as I go I feel something change.” (Ian)*

The definition of the theme *Change* comes from my understanding of how the participants spoke to change as a driving and defining force for them as an advanced martial artist. Change was a constant, ever present mechanism that required many things from the participant in order for it to occur. The definition of *Change* that I have created from these experiences is:

*Change or transformation is a fundamental component of the experience of practicing the martial arts and becoming an advanced student. Change occurs over time and with experiences gained from practice, interaction with others, and movement.*

However, the definition is not hierarchical as established through its theme, category, and sub-categories. The category and many of the sub-categories contain other categories under the theme of change, for instance Boomer’s narrative about *Time and Other* also encompasses aspects of the category *Then vs. Now or Before vs. After*. This speaks to the interconnectedness of the themes, categories, sub-categories and variations that resulted from my analysis of the data.

## Theme: Embodied Learning/Embodiment

The theme of *Embodied Learning/Embodiment* will be referred to as *Embodiment* for the remainder of Chapter Four and Chapter Five to refine the use of terminology. This theme consists of four categories: (a) *#1 Body*, (b) *#2 Mind and Spirit*, (c) *Other Ways of Knowing*, and (d) *Values*. The first two categories, *#1 Body* and *#2 Mind and Spirit*, are unique in that there is a specific order to them. This order is not arbitrary but represents the unique positioning within the narrative that the order of the two categories emerged. The body was always spoken of first, but always within relation to the concepts of mind and spirit. Also, the categories *#2 Mind and Spirit*, *Other Ways of Knowing*, and *Values* have sub-categories, and the sub-categories in *Values* contain variations of the sub-category that will be elaborated further. Also, worth noting is the category of *#2 Mind and Spirit*, which contains an additional marker to refer to the category *East vs. West* under the theme of *Interaction*, this marker will be explained in this phase. Although all of the narratives contain an aspect of embodiment, if for no other reason than the body is present in a physical manner, the narratives most concerned with embodiment come from Derrick, myself, Helen, and Greg. Each of these narratives will be used to provide excerpts of support for the categories, sub-categories, and variations that build the definition of the theme *Embodiment*.

**#1 Body.** *#1 Body* is the first category under the theme of *Embodiment*. The name and order of this category is due to the order in which the interviews that directly spoke to embodiment talked about the concept every time. The body was always mentioned first, typically in conjunction with the category of *#2 Mind and Spirit* following within the same example. All three concepts of body, mind, and spirit were considered by the participants who mentioned them in their narratives as being a goal to reach through the practice of the martial arts. Derrick spoke to embodiment through the questions of talking vs. showing your experience

and how one identifies as an advanced student. In response to talking vs. showing your experiences he stated,

*“[A]s we talk or write I think we discover our true opinions...I think I bonded with the training well because I don’t like clutter in my life...So in Aikido you should be able to do the technique as you’re discussing it to the class and still have quietness in your body to do the technique...you need to know the core techniques...foundational controls...but I think more importantly you need to be able to safe ukemi, that is safe break falls. So understanding that nage, the person doing the technique, is going to throw at the speed that you’re attacking so you need to understand that concept, that relationship between you and the attacker...Because you will be taking care of your partners” (Derrick)*

In the categories of #1 *Body* and #2 *Mind and Spirit* a core foundation which focuses on the somatic components of techniques must be established in order to cultivate the mind and spirit components that can be represented by the relationship of ukemi and nage and the concept of taking care of your partner.

Helen’s narrative was individually coded with embodied learning as change over time with the addition of practice resulted in transformation. Specifically, the term embodiment sprung up for her,

*“[F]ocusing on these moves and trying to get your body to do these things and not worrying about what all had happened over the course of the day or what was going to happen tomorrow...I had no idea that that was going to be one of the big benefits.” (Helen)*

The body being of primary importance and focus occurred early in Helen’s narrative as well as chronologically in her experience of practicing Tai Chi. The categories of #1 *Body*, #2 *Mind and Spirit*, and the sub-categories of *Order Matters but Inseparable* and *All Trained at the Same Time to Varying Degrees* also emerged through her narrative in response to the question of what her practice of Tai Chi means to her and being asked to define a philosophy.

*“Taoist Tai Chi Society has got four aims and objectives and so the improvement of the body and the dual cultivation of the mind and the body is integrated into these four objectives of making tai chi very available to all, promoting health benefits of Tai Chi, promoting cultural exchange and doing good works in the community. And so those four*



*things are bigger than just learning how to do the set and being very mechanical about it...it definitely convinces me of the duality of the working on the mind and body as one...staying centered...staying balanced, all these things have double meanings...they mean how to live your life...so the yin and yang, the equal and opposite...they're physically challenging and they are conceptually challenging so that is the dual meanings...whatever you're doing you're doing Tai Chi."* (Helen)

Greg's narrative addressed the categories of #1 *Body* and #2 *Mind and Spirit* most completely, paying special attention to the mitigating effect of age and social context in the development and order of balancing these three aspects of the theme *Embodiment*.

*"what I like is that the cultural kind of components of it...a lot of that stuff cuts across, it resonates with somebody who like me is interested in...the balancing of pieces...I really like the balance that it provides...the three...mind, body, and spirit...It's the spiritual component, sometimes puts people off because they interpret it to be religious... when you're younger...you think of it strictly as a self-defense method and you're trying to fight for your life and protecting yourself...but as you get older the parts of it that I kind of kept up with in my mind are the...breathing, and the just the repetitive nature of the empty mind kind of exercise and it's evolved now for me...but ultimately what it comes down to is...it's very solitary at times too and that spiritual piece of it has become more and more important to me and...explaining that to people can be...kind of tricky...In my mind...keeping with those three pieces of this thing together, lot of folks come into the system...might be fairly physically fit...but they need to really focus on the mind and the spirit because they don't understand the purpose of some of it...Some come in very knowledgeable about the culture and the history and...to me if you're novice in one of those three still, you still have work to do...you have to get there in all three areas. You couldn't excel in two out of the three and still continue to progress...they forced you to balance that education...and then they teach the respect and then they teach the sort of individuality, the piece of the part that you have to learn, the body, the mind is the toughest one for a lot of people...a lot of people misconstrue that I think and say I need to accept and learn about another culture, well you do have to accept the tenets of the teaching but it's...what you take from it right, it's what you learn from it...the spirituality one is probably tougher now than it used to be. Getting people to just participate and accept...it's more inner strength to me, that's the way I explain it. So being a novice to me is just you're starting out. And in any of those areas you're going to start out in the beginning and you get away from that as you learn to balance each of the three pieces."* (Greg)

The qualifier of *East vs. West* attached to the category of #2 *Mind and Spirit* is used in this format to illustrate a cross connection with another category in another theme. The segments of data that support this connection strongest come from Greg and Helen's narratives about



cultural differences, *“it has its own traditions...that makes it traditional...that cultural kind of component of it”* (Greg) and the need to be *“knowledgeable about the culture and history”* (Greg) to be an advanced martial artist. Helen speaks more directly to this connection between mind and spirit in martial arts and the concepts of East vs. West, *“just knowing how to pronounce the words Tai Chi...that was like a foreign language to me...but the Western culture doesn’t know how to react to things that are different and so they ridicule”* (Helen).

**Other Ways of Knowing.** *Other Ways of Knowing* as a category was evident within each interview, especially since the martial arts can be considered a non-Western way of knowing. Most spoke of other ways of knowing as being different from what they had grown up with or were exposed to, *“it was very exotic, very different from anything I had ever been exposed to”* (Helen) or as Greg related his exposure to the martial arts, *“my dad was I guess indifferent at first saying what do you need that for? You know I taught you how to fight...I went and I just really, really enjoyed...it was something different”* (Greg). Within this category there were three prominent sub-categories that specifically spoke to the concept of other ways of knowing. These sub-categories are: (a) *Experience Matters/Practice/Must Do It*, (b) *Application*, and (c) *Imposter Syndrome*.

***Experience Matters/Practice/Must Do It.*** This sub-category of *Other Ways of Knowing* speaks to the experiences that all of the participants possessed relating to the importance of the practice of martial arts and that the only way to truly know it or experience it was that one must do it. As Boomer describes it as,

*“what drew me in...was just like this feels really good...I guess I didn’t know it at the time but I was like it felt like I’d be nurtured there. I wouldn’t just be like GO KICK HIS ASS...or something like that of course, I was like at the time I just, I still didn’t know better, it was still so new to me. I was just kind of like okay I’m gonna learn this move”* (Boomer).

**Application.** In conjunction with the sub-category of *Practice/Must Do It* is the sub-category of *Application*. This referred to the application of the techniques learned through competitions but also through self-defense, and daily life. Frank speaks about his experiences on the mat in practice, *“When I’m on the mats...I’m in some whole other place. Mentally I’m so much more relaxed. I feel like I’m at home. I feel like I don’t...have a worry in the world. It’s great”* (Frank). He also talks about the competition side, *“I’ve been in it my whole life. I have a passion for it. I went to the AAU national championship...Qualified for the junior Olympics...I won the (tournament name omitted) multiple times. This is all I’m good at”* (Frank).

Anna spoke to the application of techniques and other ways of knowing in relation to the self-defense aspects of practicing the martial arts and the confidence that it instilled.

*“I don’t know if I could pinpoint a specific time...but I think it was the judo because usually if you’re approached you’re walking or standing...alone on the street...and the fact that I was learning how to take down someone who was bigger than me and also because at the BJJ and judo club that I go to there’s not very many girls so...everybody’s bigger than me and so I’ve gotten practice throwing big people and it made me feel like this is almost realistic practice in the terms of body size...I think the judo really helped me feel confident in that and learning like chokes and stuff. Being able to take someone down...it seems like it would if you didn’t know the martial art but learning to take advantage of the physics aspect of it made me feel confident, that I could and learning specific throws in combinations, doing this throw, well that, doing the BJJ was really connecting with that cause you’d do the throw and then what would I do once the person was on the ground hopefully actually I would just run away.”* (Anna)

Christine also spoke to the *Application* sub-category through overcoming uncomfortable situations and working through them.

*“I had a man who tried to assault me essentially [in her past] and [through her practice of martial arts] I try and make it comfortable...accept that...I do know how to defend myself, I can defend myself, and then with jujitsu...there’s different times where you have someone who’s sitting on you or we’re practicing with someone whose hands are around your throat and...what do you do in that situation and you’re trying to breathe through it like this is not real, this is okay, everything’s okay, and then you continue to practice and eventually at least for me those feelings just kind of stopped happening so it was nice cause...you’re just working through everything.”* (Christine)

Helen and Greg's narratives spoke to the sub-category of *Application* through their everyday use. *"I enjoy the world more because I have exposed myself to things that I was so uncomfortable with...it's made me less obsessive about things. Made me far more relaxed and it's given me tools to be able to relax"* (Helen). Greg explained the application through everyday management of stress relief in relation to the question posed to him about the meaning of the martial arts for him.

*"it does give me a kind of a way to find peace sometimes in those really difficult situations...when things get really, really difficult I find I can kind of retreat to some of that...I'll go for a walk...I'll just get out...comeback and go through the exercises in my head to kind of flush that stuff out. So for me it's as much now about just having a place to retreat to when I'm having one of those days when I need to get away from a lot of that pressure. It's like less about the self-defense and more about the mental health now."* (Greg).

**Imposter Syndrome.** The sub-category of *Imposter Syndrome* was evident in all of the narratives when the participants spoke about teaching responsibilities. Specifically, Boomer's experience of imposter syndrome comes from taking on responsibility for teaching after his sensei moved away and the disconnect between not feeling like he is qualified enough to fill the role.

*"[A]t that point yeah cause its, and I mean to be honest I still struggle with that, as far as...I'm not that a high rank in...any of the arts, that's the highest rank I hold but I mean...I'm in the middle...so it was always like especially at that time it was really hard cause I don't have a black belt how am I...I don't feel like I'm even qualified to do this yet this kind of thing then it's just like tough shit it's your baby now."* (Boomer)

**Values.** The interconnectedness and flow between each theme, category, sub-category, and variation is more reminiscent of a spider's web covered in dew. The primary places of interconnections occur under the categories of *Values*, which can be found under three of the four themes: (a) *Embodied Learning/Embodiment*, (b) *Interaction*, and (c) *Way of Life*. This category of *Values* inhabits a unique situation for each theme. All of these sub-categories that

make up *Values* have variations which I have included in the analysis. These variations could potentially be a subcategory within themselves, but through phase four of Braun and Clarke's (2006) model and the combining of codes, the result is the sub-category and variation list that highlights the most salient code to represent the sub-category classification within the specific theme.

Within the theme of *Embodiment*, the category of *Values* has seven sub-categories that provide support and are the salient values that relate back to *Embodiment*. The sub-categories are: (a) *Discipline*, (b) *Empowering*, (c) *Balance*, (d) *Way to Find Peace*, (e) *Relationships*, (f) *Humility*, and (g) *Responsibility*.

***Discipline and Humility.*** *Discipline* and *Humility* were sub-categories of *Values* that every participant had mentioned. However, within Ian's narrative they were particularly strong and thought out.

*"I think the first one and to me a lot of people misinterpret this word but I think the first one is always discipline. Martial arts will help instill that in you because a lot of it is listening to your teacher, going through repetitious motions over and over again, to eventually achieve a goal of being able to do a technique of being able to learn a skill but at some point you also have to bring it yourself. At some point you have to start bringing your own discipline into it. Because going to class every day, going to practice however many times you can go a week, that requires a certain amount of self-discipline, it's very easy just to say nope I'm done and not go again. So martial arts...instills and requires discipline. It's going to help you if you don't have a lot to begin with but if you really want to continue...move forward with it you have to have some of that yourself, you have to have some of that in your own mind. The other big one is humility, martial arts will humble you, if you're in a good school, if you're learning from good people. It's going to humble you day in day out. Because there are going to be people that are better than you, that are going to always be better than you no matter how long you train... So discipline and humility to me are probably the two greatest virtues that any martial artist can learn and need in themselves."* (Ian)

***Empowering.*** *Empowering* as a sub-category is most prominent in Boomer, Anna, and Christine's narratives. Boomer's experience of the empowering aspect of the martial arts is related to his rationale for beginning his journey, *"I was bullied...it's like a crappy*

*feeling...feeling helpless*” (Boomer) and his identity as an advanced martial artist, *“I’m capable...I feel confident in what I do...it’s not just fighting...it’s feeling good with your ability...with what you’ve been learning over time”* (Boomer). Anna focused on the empowering aspect through her competition and application experience which has been described above with the sub-category of *Application*. She also describes empowering aspects of having a solid foundation and giving back through teaching.

*“I don’t feel like a beginner because I feel like I have a foundation of the like fundamentals of both of those martial arts are done and in both of those areas I’ve been asked to teach, not like a whole class but say hey you work with this younger student, younger in experience student, and so that, my coach has made me feel like I’m not a beginner by giving me responsibility to feeling like he can trust me to not lead someone astray and because I do have the fundamental skills down to learn the next stuff.”* (Anna)

Christine’s narrative talked about empowering aspects in multiple places, one experience was related in the sub-category of *Application*. Another segment of her narrative that speaks to empowering is presented here.

*“I mean there was, I had, bad experiences in the past and so learning how to defend myself and things like that really initially it was exercise and this would be fun and stuff like that and it turned into this would be really useful if I’m in a bad situation again, learning one proponent that I’m really big on since I’ve been doing this so long is getting in a comfortable position with your male training partners so that when you’re in an uncomfortable position you know what to do. It becomes muscle memory and you know you’re in a safe place training with these people who care about you, you can get use to those uncomfortable situations and then something bad were to happen its muscle memory, like you’re just not thinking anymore and so that was really important and helpful.”* (Christine)

**Balance.** Through the participant’s narratives *Balance* came to be understood as a sub-category pertaining to welcoming change, openness, and the trinity of body, mind, and spirit. *Balance* as a sub-category of *Values* does not necessarily mean the physical aspect of balancing one’s body. The two narratives that best encapsulate the sub-category of *Balance* come from Helen and Greg. Helen focused on *Balance* both through the physical aspect of practicing Tai

Chi, “*trying to get the body to do these things*” (Helen), and striking a balance between her multiple selves through practice and personal life, “*I think it affects my family life, I think it affects my work life, and my recreational life*” (Helen). Helen also talked about balance between mind and body,

*“dual cultivation of the mind and the body...staying centered...staying balanced, all these things have double meanings so they have meanings physically in the set of staying focused, staying centered, staying balanced and then they mean how to live your life...so the yin and yang, the equal and opposite...they’re physically challenging and they are conceptually challenging so that is the dual meanings.”* (Helen)

Helen also spoke to being open and welcoming change in reference to *Balance* as a *Value*, “*openness to a new way of doing things. Tolerance of change...welcoming change...not just tolerating it*” (Helen).

Greg spoke about *Balance* as resonance with the martial arts that cuts across cultures and relates to the body, mind, and spirit which were covered at earlier in this chapter, “*it’s interesting for me because a lot of that stuff cuts across, it resonates with somebody who like me is interested in...the balancing of pieces*” (Greg). He also spoke to the balance that martial arts provide for you both inside the dojo and outside,

*“just like anything else, the idea of practice is...so many of these kids today are just buried in...a lot of meaning less stuff, just exercising, the type of stuff the schools assign, even just the sports they’re inundated and overwhelmed with the one thing that their kind of, it’s diversity and being able to do many things and that’s having that balance, I like the lesson that it teaches there.”* (Greg)

**Way to Find Peace.** *Way to Find Peace* as a sub-category under the theme of *Embodiment* focused primarily on the bodily relief that was evoked through passages of stress relief, a retreat, and feeling of catharsis. Greg and Frank both spoke to stress relief and a way to find peace previously under the sub-category of *Application*. Greg also mentioned the ability to retreat into his practice as well. Helen has also previously spoken at length about the stress relief



benefits that her practice of Tai Chi affords her. An interesting variation of the sub-category of *Way to Find Peace* is the code of *Catharsis* that I ascribed to a couple of the interviews. Of particular interest is Christine's narrative segment that spoke to the sub-category of *Application*, "*and then you continue to practice and eventually at least for me those feelings just kind of stopped happening*" (Christine). The catharsis occurred as a result of a continuation of practicing which released the experience of assault into a method for decreasing the feeling of helplessness, as described by Boomer's narrative. Ultimately, transforming the experience through the embodied aspect of the martial arts into a positive non-victimizing sensation.

***Relationships.*** *Relationships* as a sub-category of the theme of *Embodiment* speaks to the interaction of experience through the process of working with the other. This sub-category of *Relationships* is also a facet of the theme of *Interaction*, but it is necessary to include in *Embodiment* because of the focus on the outcome of the interaction evidenced through the variations of: *Enjoyment*, *Fun*, *Love*, and *Belonging*. Helen talked about the enjoyment in her interactions with others that she practices with and the push that she experiences through goals that she sets for herself, "*I was so impressed with her ability to do the second half and my complete ineptness at it that I saw that as a standard for myself...so it was my goal*" (Helen). A particular experience that Anna related in regard to the sub-categories of *Relationships* is,

*"when I was awarded my blue belt and around that time was when I started feeling like I...just noticed when I'm rolling with people I feel like...I just smoothly move from move to move like I try this oh that's not working I just [move smoothly] as opposed to being really rigid and jumbled...I think that's more of a slow [process] all of a sudden I realized hey I feel way more confident about this. And by that point...I was a whole belt above the white belts so when I would roll with white belts it would feel like oh you should change this when you roll, oh no that's don't make that mistake...and stuff."*  
(Anna)

Frank's narrative was constantly relating to his experiences with the other in regard to the sub-category of *Relationships* when practicing the martial arts, but expressed a reciprocal relationship.

*"I think the only thing I really like about it is being able to give people the chance to be as happy as I am with it...it has given me such a passion that I want to give back to it...it means to care. To really care, not to be there for the rank or for the time. But to be there because you want to be there...but the people that want to learn why, why this martial art came into being, the history, just hungry. You have to be hungry...brought about a greater love for my family, more respect for other people."* (Frank)

Boomer spoke to the sub-category of *Relationships* through belonging and sense of family, which has been described previously under the sub-category of *Time and Other* under the theme of *Change*. However, segment of Boomer's narrative that speaks the deepest connection to the sub-category of *Relationships* is,

*"it's still about having fun too...nothing makes me giggle like rolling with kids, you're rolling with some almost 20 something...learning for the first time or whatever and helping them out or it's like, no, no, no, it's just a little...THAT'S IT (demonstrating an arm bar)...that always toots my horn, was like that just makes my day a lot of times."* (Boomer)

**Responsibility.** The sub-category of *Responsibility* under the category of *Values* and the theme of *Embodiment* focuses less on the aspect of teaching roles taken up by advanced students, which are more salient in the next theme of *Interaction*. This conceptualization of responsibility is viewed in relation to learning, the responsibility to learn more than what is taught and the sense of obligation necessary to take the responsibility for continuing your own learning as an advanced martial artist. The narratives that most strongly speak to this sub-category come from Derrick, Eric, Ian, myself and Helen. Derrick spoke about milestones that martial artists reach when they may realize that they identify as advanced students, *"there are milestones that come to mind...I committed to being there and picked up things more wholly than that student"* (Derrick). Eric spoke to a complimentary concept to Derrick's in that the *"difference between being a white*



*belt and black belt...You should ask those questions cause you're now understanding, you understand the art enough that you can start applying it your own way...that makes you an advanced student is you start asking those questions"* (Eric).

Ian speaks to constantly learning and continuing to grow as a martial artist as being a responsibility that he has to take on himself.

*"As I got a better understanding of what it meant to be a martial artist...I sort of developed a more realistic view of what it meant, it was still a goal and I kept wanting...I have to keep going until I get there...I'm continuing to grow that experience...a very intense desire to know more, I have a very constant need to learn about martial arts, as much as I can as often as I can. To the point that I'll sit at home for hours on end watching YouTube videos and reading Wikipedia pages on martial arts that I don't even practice...I had to keep learning."* (Ian)

In a similar vein Helen speaks to responsibility to learn more through what she feels makes her an advanced martial artist.

*"So I have taken advantage of intensives and workshops and some of these other sets...I have taken upon myself to practice on my own in my own howuse....in my sense of obligation as an instructor so if an instructor comes, a workshop instructor comes to town...everyone's seeing the exact same instruction that I have but I have an additional responsibility to make sure that I grasp it as well as I possibly can. So I'm going to need to practice at home and make sure I've written notes down and can keep track of what did the instructor say, how did they do it, what did they tell us to focus on so that I can remind myself and my students how to do that...it was my goal and I didn't expect others to have that goal...but I make myself do it."* (Helen)

All of the categories of *Embodiment* speak to an attempt to understand ourselves and the other through the body, mind, and spirit. The interplay that results from the training of the body works in conjunction with the strengthening of the mind and fortifying of the spirit. This was exhibited through other ways of knowing and understanding our experiences and interactions in the world through the participant's narratives, as well as values that assist in the development of that understanding. During my bracketing interview I was asked to define embodiment. After co-constructing the participant's narratives, coding and analyzing the data, and writing it up, I

am struck by the salience and resonance of their experiences with my initial definition. I believe that this initial definition holds up to scrutiny, and with the support of the participant's experiences has become solidified into a coherent definition of *Embodiment* through the practice of the martial arts. The definition of theme *Embodiment* is:

*Embodiment means to learn through all of the possible processes that your body can learn through, together. This includes the cognitive, rational, spiritual, emotional, physical, and others. However, it does not state that this learning occurs independently but rather in conjunction with each other way of learning. Embodiment is about learning as a whole person, not just individual pieces.*

### **Theme: Interaction**

The next theme to discuss focuses on the interactions that take place as a result of the martial arts, especially the interactions that lead to becoming an advanced martial artist. This theme consists of four categories: (a) *Other and Self*, (b) *East vs. West*, (c) *Other Ways of Knowing*, and (d) *Other as Teacher*. Of particular note within this theme is the sub-category of *Excludes Gender* under the category of *Other and Self*. This sub-category contains an outlier of this study which I discuss during this section. Also, as mentioned previously there is a connection between the category of *East vs. West* and the theme of *Embodiment*.

**Other and Self.** This category focuses on the way martial artists, especially advanced martial artists, interact with the other through practice, competition, and everyday interactions. It also addresses how the interactions of others affect our self and how the self in turn interacts with the other. Another key component of this category is taking care of the other, not just teaching them. Helen speaks to this aspect through a change that occurs over time, noticing that the experience was prominent during workshops in she attended.

*“So the opportunity to not be selfish or irritated with circumstances like that, when I first started going to these workshops or even our big classes, I would find myself really annoyed if somebody got in my space, lined up too close to me, I’d go get in line and take care of myself and make sure I had a good space, now it’s far more does everybody have*

*room, can we, what can I do to accommodate more space for you so that that's when I say I think it's made me, it hasn't made me a good person necessarily it's made me a better person than I was, I think and more aware of people and other people's needs, not just looking out for myself."* (Helen)

**Recognition By and From.** The sub-category was evident in everyone's narrative primarily through the experience of being trusted to teach. Anna speaks to this by saying, *"I've been asked to teach, not like a whole class but say hey you work with this younger student...my coach has made me feel like I'm not a beginner by giving me responsibility to feeling like he can trust me to not lead someone astray"* (Anna). Boomer talks about being thrust into a position to teach unexpectedly, *"I got put into a position of being like a substitute teacher...my sensei moved away...everybody's like the fuck we gonna do...we got nowhere to train...and it was kind of like I got space at my house...it just turned into...you're in charge kind of thing"* (Boomer). Derrick relates a responsibility given to him by his sensei as a milestone to becoming an advanced martial artist,

*"Being otomo [a honorary position for an advanced martial art student] for Sekishihan who's 8<sup>th</sup> Dan from Honbu dojo being his otomo which is a role that doesn't even really exist in modern Japan much anymore. It harkens back to at least the generation before I'm not familiar with how far the role goes back, doorman, concierge, by your side, left hand man, for the purposes of visit or while visiting with your instructor, so being otomo for high level VIP from Honbu dojo and a kind and sharing man that responsibility was an investment in an advanced student."* (Derrick)

Greg relates the experience of recognition by others from his initial experience of meeting the sensei of his current dojo.

*"[B]ut when I walked back into (sensei's name omitted) class it felt like, starting right here at the beginning. And it was interesting because we had a really important conversation early on and I said you know I do feel like I'm starting over, I feel like I've got to get back to where I was before I'd feel right wearing the belt that I have and he said no, once you're there you're always there. He said yeah you got to get back there but you earned it, you earned it especially under (name omitted) and so it was funny talking about lineage and history and he knew without a shadow of a doubt that I earned that third degree brown belt right."* (Greg)

Ian feels that the recognition by others for his abilities to be creative and surprise them is what makes him feel like an advanced martial artist.

*“Not one specific event but more like a series of moments that started occurring...Where during either practice or even during a few competitions people that I had worked with before...hearing them say things like wow I can’t believe you did that, wow I can’t believe you caught that. That was unexpected. When I found myself able to surprise people, when I found myself able to accomplish techniques or strategies within competitions that people who knew me and knew what I was capable of didn’t expect or couldn’t expect, that was...an ah ha moment...so I can surprise people I can make things happen without it being expected because to me beginner, people who are early in their career in martial arts need to follow patterns...you start by learning route, you start by learning the pattern. When you start finding creativity, when you start finding innovation inside your techniques, inside your skills, that’s when you start to...bridge that gap from beginner to advanced.” (Ian)*

Christine’s narrative provides support for the recognition by others being an aspect of becoming an advanced martial artist. However, her story focuses on the recognition of gender as a non-influencing factor, *Gender* also exists as an outlier for the study. Christine recognizes that the recognition from others that she practices with is due to her skill, time, and dedication (or blood, sweat, and tears).

*“[T]he issue was much more of the white belt because no matter what stripe I was or where I was it was, you’re a small female and you’re a white belt, you probably don’t know anything, you probably break easy and so people had a hesitancy to do anything with me at all...but when it was a blue belt then it was...okay you put your time in you obviously [have] been...punished a few times so you can probably handle it, now purple belt we just want to kill you, like it’s just...you’ve obviously put in your time and now we just want to beat you up just because we can and I’m like okay sure yeah let’s go, so as you move through the ranks it definitely changed significantly...being someone that people can look to because its oh she’s stuck around she got through it she got the higher belt and she’s still going so people are starting to look to me a little bit, and so I like being a person where it’s...yeah I’m still here...you get kind of treated differently also as a purple belt its oh now you’re a little more respected, it’s just kind of understood that its advanced even though one day I was and one day I wasn’t and absolutely nothing changed in-between, just a different color. It’s like a birthday...but then me looking and saying well I know this person’s really good and I tapped them out finally so I know I’m doing really good too...you get to a level and you become advanced because it’s understood that if I say something you know what I’m talking about...it’s kind of like taking your three or four hundred level courses in college, you’ve had your base line*

*training so you are in advanced classes and you are allowed to do more and you are allowed to help and teach and more is expected of you.” (Christine)*

However, it was not always that way and her gender still plays an influence in her experience,

*“I know that’s a big thing with females where its well you’ve been here for a certain amount of time we’ll just give you a belt and then everyone goes well they don’t really deserve it because they can’t tap out white belts and you’re giving them a purple belt just because and I’m going okay well I am tapping out purple belts and I’m a blue belt so give me my damn purple belt already. And I didn’t have anyone who said you don’t deserve this or have anyone say behind my back that I didn’t deserve it either. But yeah everyone seemed very supportive and agreed that I was where I should be so that was good...I’ve put in my time and I’ve put in my effort and...now guys don’t see me as a female they see me as a small partner so they won’t use their weight against me cause they know neither one of us is going to get anything out of it but they don’t see me as delicate or breakable.” (Christine)*

Gender becomes more prominent for Christine when she is working with new students.

*“[B]ut yeah I mean it’s not me trying out of my way to and I certainly never want to be that female where another one shows up and I go well I have to show my dominance and let you know but I definitely had girls who showed up just to find boyfriends, and they are paired with me and I’ve gone okay well I’m going to go ahead and make life really unpleasant for you and let you know how things are going to go and they didn’t usually come back after that...but that’s something where you get looked at a little differently as a female its well yeah but you’ve been here for a really long time so obviously you must be tough and you must be good and people respect you so it’s getting accepted once you beat up enough people (both laugh) just takes a while...well they’re drastically different. New female students and I don’t feel like I’ve ever had this but I have this interaction with females a lot where I’ve always been a tomboy and so when I shake a females hand and it’s the limp hand delicate, when I train with females the new ones it feels like that, like I can’t go full force with them because I do feel like, I feel like I’m going to hurt you and so I always have to bring it back a little bit or I’m used to having to move 180 pound man and now I’m working with 120 pounds and so I have to correct that so I don’t throw them across the room...where as with new guys...they are a spaz, they are total spaz, and then it’s like survival mode because they don’t know anything and so it’s well I’m just gonna flail around and hope something works and it’s like you don’t have to do that...the same thing with the other students you know for a long time I couldn’t handle rolling with them because they were violent. You know they’re going 100 percent and they’re trying to break my arm off and I didn’t have the skills to shut it down and I finally another more advanced thought was I can now roll with these guys and just shut down everything that they’re doing and go okay calm down, okay I have you in this position try and get out of it, okay well now I’ve got you stuck here try and, nope that’s not gonna work you know, whereas with the females is a lot, you have to be a little bit more delicate because I don’t want to smash them and them just not come back.” (Christine)*

For Christine *Gender* provides dissonance within her experience, both being a non-issue and issue of great importance that she holds to.

**East vs. West.** This category constitutes more than just a dichotomy of examining an Eastern practice (i.e., martial arts) in relation to its Western context, although that is a part of it. Specifically, in the participants' narratives *East vs. West* is mentioned in relation to the category of #2 *Mind and Spirit* within the theme of *Embodiment* which has previously been discussed. In the theme *Interaction*, *East vs. West* refers to specific experiences in the narratives that were concerned with: (a) Western media exposure, (b) stereotypes and the challenging of those stereotypes, and what are seen as (c) non-traditional aspects/approaches and traditional aspects and approaches to martial arts. Each of these experiences will be elaborated on further in this section.

Western media exposure was a primary experience that led to the beginning of and recognition of the martial arts by many of the participants. Derrick and Ian clearly recall instances in which their exposure to the Western media portrayal of martial arts began their journey. "*I had seen Aikido in a Discovery Chanel like list of something sort of hokey like 13 most extreme martial arts, coming in at number 7, Aikido*" (Derrick). Ian recalled that his journey "*started with TV shows that I watched when I was a little kid...I used to watch those shows...and they would do all these martial arts things and I loved it. I just couldn't stop watching it...I started taking classes and it kind of snowballed from that*" (Ian). Both, may have begun because of the exposure to Western media portrayals of martial arts but the portrayals did not match up to the reality for Derrick or Ian. Ian talked about developing a more realistic view through practice and time while Derrick brought up the influence that his sensei had on his



outlook and practice of Aikido, which will be discussed later under the category of *Other as Teacher* in this section.

Stereotypes, primarily overcoming them, was addressed previously in Christine's experiences of issues related to the sub-category of *Gender*. Helen's narrative provides a bridge between the experience of stereotypes and Western media exposure.

*"Well it wasn't really a mainstream thing for (name of city omitted) to practice tai chi it wasn't like playing tennis or swimming or golfing or something like that and so, I didn't know anything about it I didn't know it's history, I didn't know what underlying philosophy or beliefs or, so it was very exotic, very different from anything I had ever been exposed to or know anything about and experienced. And so it was just, I wasn't ready to reveal to myself probably, very much less the world that I was doing this, I guess I didn't want to be laughed at... Western culture doesn't know how to react to things that are different and so they ridicule and so I recognize that and don't want to be ridiculed but now can tolerate that, and actually I look at that and don't care, I just actually feel you don't know what you're missing. It's sort of if you only knew what I had you'd be envious of me instead of laughing at me."* (Helen)

The final experience that falls under the category *East vs. West* is dealing with traditional and non-traditional aspects/approaches of practicing the martial arts. Eric and I discussed in his narrative traditional styles and non-traditional styles of martial arts as well as media exposure and stereotypes. In this excerpt there is a conversation between Eric and me. Eric's responses are indicated by an "R:" in front of them and my response is indicated by an "I:" in front of it.

*"R: our curriculum, our testing is just in the traditional style of Uechi and a lot of the Okinawan styles are the ones that seem to the three main styles seem to be something that hold on to tradition a little bit. I don't think there's any goju schools around here it just depends on where the, certain areas if you go up to Massachusetts there's a big group of Uechi because that's where Uechi started in America, from George Madsen, here Isshin-Ryu is pretty big so there's several Isshin-Ryu schools*

*I: and then out on the West coast there's everything.*

*R: The West coast just got everything in general so yeah.*

*I: yeah that's one of the things I'm hoping might come out of this study. Is that it can be replicated in other areas of the US, in other areas of Europe, Western countries because it's just from talking with people it's kind of been my experience that that's, there's not a lot of difference just...talking with people, with how it's practiced in the West. So it would be nice to get kind of a basis for...what's the Western idea of practicing the martial arts and then compare that with what's more traditional Asian ways of practicing martial*

*arts. And even then I think it's gonna be I think it's gonna be changing because a lot of martial arts are very sports oriented now. Judo and tae kwon do especially, they're Olympic sports it's kind of you're training not for the martial art itself anymore you're training to win a gold medal. And we get over at (university name omitted) we get a couple of exchange students from South Korea that are they're not Olympic medalists in judo but they qualified for the Olympics in judo and just the way they approach the practice of it is such a fundamental difference, it's incredible.*

*R: I'm excited to see karate to go on the Olympics. Me and my wife, we've actually talked about trying to go to the Tokyo Olympics, I want to go to Tokyo, I want to go to Japan, I want to go to Okinawa. Rock climbing is also in the Olympics so I mean things that I do."* (Eric)

Greg also speaks to this idea of traditional and non-traditional aspects/approaches to the martial arts through a comparison of "old school and new school" ways of teaching.

*"[Y]ou know a lot of the karate has changed too in terms of the way that teacher's interact with the students and so he was, (name omitted) was an old school guy, he was a lot like my dad. He was going to beat your ass until you toughened up. That was the methodology, part of the lesson. And so we would have these Saturday classes and if he liked you and he thought you had ability you were in even bigger trouble... I think back on when I'm practicing now and (sensei name omitted) and I are comparing notes and talking through things I tend to revert to some of those older habits because while they don't teach them today, because they're afraid it might be too hard on the students or it might be...misconstrued as, you got to watch it in this litigious society with everything that's going on."* (Greg)

**Other Ways of Knowing.** The next category in the theme of *Interaction* is *Other Ways of Knowing*. However, there is a unique aspect which distinguishes this category from the identically named category in the theme of *Embodiment*. The unique characteristic that situates this category under the theme of *Interaction* is its sub-category of *Dialogue*. The way in which the participants talked about dialogue was consistently through interactions with others, which defined itself as a category to fall under the theme of *Interaction* instead of *Embodiment*. Derrick spoke to *Dialogue* as being a "quietness in your body" (Derrick) that was incorporated with your interactions in practice with the other. Derrick also spoke to his instructor and how he spoke through his techniques, "often times as my instructor is showing the technique he's talking about it, meaning that he's using the correct breathing and muscles and control" (Derrick). This



focus on the proper use of the body through techniques speaks to the use of the body represented in dialogue. This representation is an other way of knowing which speaks to the different ways that the body speaks to the other bodies through interaction, change, and movement.

Boomer speaks of *Dialogue* in relation to his philosophy of the martial arts.

*"I guess its learning how to walk again...or learning how to be fluid...you're learning the dynamics of opposites...when they expand you contract when they contract you expand it's a dance I mean it's a dialogue with someone else it's just in a different form than what people are used to. And it brings a whole different set of emotions with it cause it's not what they're used to...it turns so many different things, it's just hard to explain I guess, cause sometimes it's scary, sometimes it's fun...sometimes it's sad, its everywhere but it's a good life learning school of thought I guess you could say it's like going to church, I guess that's better way to describe it cause I was like it turns into that for you too, its everything."* (Boomer)

Boomer describes dialogue as a dance and that people are not used to it. He also relates the different sets of emotions that can accompany this different way of dialogue.

Dialogue does not have to be verbalized in the martial arts. There are different modes in which to communicate and depending on the experience of those involved with the interaction different modes of communication are available. Dialogue in the martial arts is a unique and variable other way of knowing, but one in which verbal language does not hold the only worth.

**Other as Teacher.** The final category to discuss under the theme *Interaction* is *Other as Teacher*. This category is supported by four sub-categories: (a) *Most Important*, (b) *Modeling*, (c) *Lineage*, and (d) *Teaching*. In previous sections I have broken out each sub-category and discussed salient excerpts from the interviews that spoke truth to the category that they were a part of. However, in this category each of the sub-categories are spoken in the same breath and it would not honor the participant's words to individually discuss each category separately. In order to honor the participant's experiences, I have chosen the four interviews that speak most strongly to the category and encompass all four sub-categories.

Greg speaks about the importance of his first teacher, the values that were instilled, and lessons learned. Greg then begins speaking about finding a new teacher, what it means to develop a legacy and lineage, and finally about giving back and becoming a teacher.

*“I grew up in a pretty rough neighborhood, my dad and my grandfather were boxers...so grew up in an area when you were a skinny kid with a smart mouth you got the crap beat out of you a lot...so initially my dad kind of raised me, taught me how to handle myself, fight with my hands mostly like traditional boxing...and then I was in a situation...and...a state police officer that was there and kind of witnessed some of what happened and encouraged me...to check it out... I at the time didn't even realize, you're getting ready to spend some time studying with like this legend...it wasn't until years later I realized that was (name omitted) and you knew him as (name omitted)...I remember it was...seven or eight years, I got an e-mail from a friend back home that...(name omitted) had passed away. And that really bothered me. That was...somebody that...was for those three and a half years was a really important part of my kind of growth as a person because (name omitted)...was an awesome guy...he would always challenge you...and now regrouping here...connecting with (name omitted)...having studied for...three years under (name omitted) kind of gave me instant credibility with this local community... (name omitted) was an old school guy, he was a lot like my dad...so we would have these Saturday classes and if he liked you and he thought you had ability you were in even bigger trouble...he would always put me with the fastest, most skilled, strongest, whatever black belt that was there that day...but he knew that I needed that because...I'd take it out on the street and there were a number of instances where if I hadn't had that ability and I hadn't been challenged I probably would have gotten...hurt really, really badly...and he knew that...I never told him anything about myself, but (name omitted) just had that...there's this enormous amount of gratitude that I have...and then trying to pass some of that on...one of the things you should start to remember as you get more into the system...is definitely an obligation to give back to...younger or more newer students...that's been an important part of the experience for me...you have to be humble and you have to be willing to teach, even if it's just a little bit here and there...you know you really want to pass that on...you want to give them a little bit of what (name omitted) taught you because he was special...if you're not willing to share...if you're not willing to pass on what you know and teach...if you're not willing to teach you're probably not willing to learn...when you get to that level [advanced martial artist] it's not about letting everybody else know how good you are. It's about sharing with everybody else...not holding onto those things you know and hoarding that knowledge...it kind of becomes part of your own legacy too.” (Greg)*

Boomer spoke about the sensei and family atmosphere that encouraged him to stick with and continue in one of his many practiced styles of martial arts. He speaks to the qualities of being genuine and having passion as being something that he looks for in somebody he wants to

learn from. In this excerpt from Boomer's transcript an "R" indicates responses from Boomer and an "I" indicates responses from the interviewer.

*"R: ...I went shopping so to speak for a new school and...it's kind of one of those you walk into the place and it's just like oh this is it...I walked in I could smell the nam champa burning in there...this big open space, concrete floors, you got the big yellow and black yin and yang on the floor...it felt very homely, it didn't feel like a belt factory...it didn't feel hostile at all...it felt like a family, and that's what drew me in...this feels like I'll be I guess I didn't know it at the time but I was like it felt like I'd be nurtured there...I still didn't know better it was still so new to me...*

*I: ...are there any particular qualities that you look in for somebody to exhibit to want to practice with them...*

*R: ...the feel that I get off of them is usually the biggest thing to me cause it's like I can...feel like when they're just being macho...like they don't quite know what they're doing but you know they're going to try to play it off like they do for like generally the more genuine the person feels the more at ease I am training with them...*

*I: so you said genuine and I wondered if you could talk more about, like what that feels like or what that means to you?*

*R: it's like they're not trying to sell you on anything I guess would be one way to put it...they're just like yeah this is what I do...like they're just presenting what they do...some of them will just be like you don't like it there's the door go...but it's like they're, they love what they do and it shows...they're not just going through the motions to get a check... the passion is a big part of it...sifu (Name omitted) [another term for teacher] he used to crack me up all the time like...we would go and do...the lion dances...down by the river...I remember sitting in his van like there's a bunch of us piled into his van and he ran into Kroger to go get some bak choy to feed to the lion at the end and he comes out and he's like (sounds and hand motions moving quickly like in a movie)...stuff while he's just like walking out of the Kroger...like those crazy homeless guys that like talk to themselves very loudly kind of thing...it cracked me up but it also inspired me by like how devoted he was to what he was doing...it was just like his daily routine almost, he couldn't help but do that but then again...there's like a dozen eyes of like these young kids from his school sitting out there like did you see what sifu did?...I was like yeah of course he's gonna do some silly shit...but its stuff like that that usually makes me really happy to be under people like him." (Boomer)*

Derrick spoke to being enthralled watching his sensei, not knowing the difference between watching and when training occurred. He also felt the connection between himself and his sensei being a father figure and through the belief that his sensei is a person to model his life around.

*"I don't actually remember watching the techniques I only remember imagining doing them so I was already studying as soon as I saw it... so I have a hard time distinguishing*

*the first time I saw aikido live from what I saw and what I was imagining doing... I found it fascinating to be around sensei and interact with the focus of his Ki and spirit and practical thinking...I was intimidated by his directness and impressed by his control...Except for the intimidation, now he's more like a father figure...he's given me more liberties and more responsibilities...so in aikido you should be able to do the technique as you're discussing it...often times as my instructor is showing the technique he's talking about it, meaning that he's using the correct breathing and muscles and control while actually speaking...Because you will be taking care of your partners, your kohai as you are their senpai,[relationship between a younger student and older student respectively] it's not a pejorative relationship but it's a seniority relationship. And in o-sensei's [founder of aikido] day you had to take ukemi for three years before you were allowed to do the techniques so you knew them you just did them from the other side. You had to show a dedication to knowing how to attack and protect yourself as you attack. I would think within the combination of those two technical aspects those [are] the two things the advanced student is capable of or requires them to be labeled as advanced student. And also I believe...you've given part of yourself to the dojo...you do the smallest job, no job is too big or too small...you're willing to do anything that jobs aren't beneath you...you're an extension of your instructor's will." (Derrick)*

Finally, Eric spoke directly to the sensei as being a father figure to him, more so than his actual father. He spoke to how lessons and values taught by his sensei have shaped him into who he is today as a person, not just a martial artist. In this excerpt from Eric's transcript an "R" indicates responses from Eric and an "I" indicates responses from the interviewer.

*"R: My biological father, I don't want to call him anything other than that, was in the same platoon with my first sensei...I like being able to protect the ones I love and unfortunately at a very young age of like 7 I had to do that for my mother against my own father. Parents have been divorced since I was 9 so my mom and my sensei who became more of my father figure or who made me as I am as an adult and basically, martial arts still has shaped some of who I am.*

*I: can you say more about how your sensei was more of a father figure to you?*

*R: I mean, he's the person that I could look up to. He's the person that I could trust. He taught me the values that martial arts is supposed to, we talked about a martial science and an art versus not a fighting system, even though it's there to learn self-defense but teaching you self-discipline and respect, self-confidence, respect for others, things that I certainly was not getting from my father...it's not the style that's important, it's not what you're paying for and I've been told that before...it's the instructor and it's the people in that class and I've not taken styles that I wanted to learn because I did not have that connection with the instructor and maybe it's me looking for that father figure every time I step inside of a dojo, because that's who my father figure was as a child but my sensei is the most important aspect of my martial arts." (Eric)*

Eric also spoke about being able to recognize if a place was right for him to train at in a similar fashion to Boomer's experience. This knowledge of studying at the right place stems, for both of them, from the type of person that they want to learn from, not the type of martial art being taught.

*“[Y]eah, there comes to a point when you realize...I've studied so many different styles of martial arts and that has, as I've gotten in and out of them, you walk into a different dojo or a school...and you can tell whether or not it's a place you want to train. You can sense it, you can feel it, it doesn't take long talking to the instructor to know if they know what they're talking about, if they're going to share the values that you look for when you talk about martial arts. As I said there are some schools that I didn't study just because...they were more worried about the money and promoting than they were about their students...you realize just after experience you have some greater understanding of the art even though you might be an advanced student you always see yourself as a beginner because we're always learning...my sensei used a term that...it was those first ten ranks you're just sharpening your tools and then once you reach black belt you're learning how to use them. So I mean at that point if I'm just now learning how to use my tools I'm still a beginner.” (Eric)*

The theme *Interaction* is primarily concerned with the way in which the advanced martial artist interacts with the other. The other in this theme has been described as the other person, partner, self, and teacher. This way of interacting with the other leads to a recognition by them and the self of how the participant is interacting with their environment, the impact that they have on it and themselves. This recognition of the interaction with the other was also considered as a difference between Eastern approaches to interaction and life, which highlight relationships and social interactions, and Western approaches, which are more individually centered in nature. The way that most of the participant's interacted with the other came about as a dialogue that they were having. However, this dialogue was non-verbal in nature, rather it was felt through the body, spirit, and soul. Under this theme was also the category of the *Other as Teacher* which plays an integral part in the foundation and shaping of the advanced martial artist. The definition of the theme *Interaction* derived from my understanding of the participants' experience is:

*Interaction does not occur in a vacuum, but rather in relation to an Other. The other in the interaction may be the imagined other or real and physical other of a partner. The interaction with the Other is both verbal and non-verbal, both felt and heard. This interaction has profound effects on the advanced martial artist and the Other, developing further and deeper with each episode. The interaction is reciprocal, and mutually benefits all parties involved, even though the benefit may not be evident at the time of interaction. An advanced martial artist regards the interaction between themselves and the Other as Teacher to be of important significance, more so than the martial art that is practiced.*

There is a caveat to the theme Interaction, it is the category of *Values* which I did not discuss in this section. These values are the same shared with the theme *Embodiment*, and those that will soon be discussed under the theme *Way of Life*. I have chosen to not include support for the category of *Values* here as it would be a retreading over already covered areas and the values discussed in the next section align with the theme *Way of Life* in a more appropriate fashion for this study.

### **Theme: Way of Life**

The final theme to emerge from the coding and analysis phases is Way of Life. This theme is comprised of two categories: (a) *Living the Day to Day*, and (b) *Values*. Within the category of *Values* are seven sub-categories which share similarities to those sub-categories with similar variations as those listed under the category of *Values* within the theme of *Embodiment*. They are: (a) *Passion*, (b) *Identity*, (c) *Stress Relief*, (d) *Fit-ness*, (e) *Giving Back*, (f) *Honesty*, and (g) *Respect*. However, the category of *Values* within the theme *Way of Life* focuses on the experiences that are more expressive of this theme and illustrate a greater understanding of the martial arts being a way of life for the advanced martial artist rather than being values that are embodied for them. This may seem like a splitting of hairs or arguing of semantics, but I believe the theme *Way of Life* is unique enough to warrant its own theme with categories to support it rather than have it subsumed within the theme of *Embodiment*.



**Living the Day to Day.** The phrase comes from Greg's interview but is evident within all interviews conducted. *Living the Day to Day* illustrates the aspects that advanced martial artists use on a daily basis, outside of the dojo. It speaks to the experiences of having to use the martial arts in their daily lives. Anna speaks to the use of the martial arts in her daily life through the rekindling of the sport mentality that she grew up around.

*"Because I grew up in it, [sport mentality] my family's more primarily an athletic family I was like one of two out of the seven people in my family who did music so...music was mostly my thing but the athleticism was a family thing...I hadn't done any sports in over four years because I didn't do any in my undergraduate, it was just too busy for me I felt. So when I started liking it [martial arts] and learning that there were tournaments and competitions that really appealed to my jock side, it made me think I can, I'm really passionate about sports, about playing sports and so it really appealed to that side of me that hadn't been used in a while. I hadn't gotten to have that side of me in a while, just the music side...which is great that's what I wanted to do as a career but I had put all the sports on hold, and so this was like ah yes I can, that side of me can be opened up again especially the competitive side, so that was fun."* (Anna)

Anna also referred to the use of techniques she learned, ukemi or falls that may have potentially saved her unborn child.

*"Flip flops on wet cement, cement when it's been raining. Flip flops always slide right...so I remember sliding forward and I did a back break fall and I thought wow that didn't hurt very bad and I was so excited that and I remembered that you had said that a lot of people have a lot less hip, I think it was in your class a lot of people have a lot less problems when they are elderly, so I remember that happening twice where I fell and didn't hurt as much as I would have because I didn't brace the fall I just rolled into it. Last year when I was pregnant I was a bigger pregnant I don't remember when it was so I can't remember if it was more like five months or seven months but I was carrying my laptop into my music room and the light was off and I forgot I had my trombone case and trombone out on the ground and so I forgot and I tripped forward like actually was falling forward and I had a laptop in my hand and but I in the middle of the fall I turned myself and rolled into the fall and the only thing I did to my belly was I hit the laptop into my belly but I thought oh my gosh thank goodness for the judo because I just it just was so instinctual in all the situations, especially that one because it had been like two years doing martial arts and it was just really nice to feel like I was able to be more safe."* (Anna)

Christine speaks to the daily use of her practice of the martial arts in reference to her job and her identity at her job and in social interactions.

*“I’m now in a relationship when I was dating it was oh what do you do, oh I’m a death investigator, and then oh what do you do for fun, oh I choke my friends...and it was very like this woman can hurt you and then no one will find your body (both laugh) and so it was very like...I need to be really careful with her...because it gave off this I’m not a victim, I’m not going to be a victim, you can touch me and then you’re going to regret it. And so I didn’t have to prove it and that was nice because I gave off this confidence where...I do know what I’m doing and I don’t need to prove it to you but if I have to then I will...I have faster reflexes and with my job sometimes I have to get into awkward spaces and weird positions and I’ve gotten the flexibility and the strength, the strength is a big thing, I am having to move people and so being able to do that without assistance and being able to shimmy into awkward places and it’s the little things...I haven’t been in a position where I had to defend myself but a friend and I were talking about that where she’s also a martial artist, also with some assault in her past and she said you know it’s funny because when you get that confidence and you’re like all right I’m ready for a fight, who wants to fight then no one wants to fight, but when you’re walking around with victim written across your forehead then everyone wants to step up to you but now that you actually want to throw down everyone’s like no, I’m gonna leave you, I’m gonna go over find the smaller female, I’m gonna leave you alone, aww come on, but which is obviously a good thing. But yeah it’s all little things...at work I’m the guard dog in our office. I sit essentially right in front of the door and everyone else is kind of to my side or behind me and so they always joke that I’m the first line of defense when anyone comes into our office so it’s...I’m not the friendliest person speaking and then...of course if anyone, if anything happens you know Christine will take care of it. I’ll throw my chair at them like what am I gonna do?” (Christine)*

Like Christine, Ian speaks about the daily benefits of the martial arts in relation to his social interactions and feelings of control.

*“I get a huge amount of my social interaction through martial arts...something that I keep with me for the rest of my life...martial arts helps me unwind mentally...I don’t get as wound up as easily outside...I can see the difference...between the person that I was before I started practicing regularly and the person that I am having practiced regularly...that feeling of control is starting to come with me and find its way outside of practice.” (Ian)*

Boomer speaks to the role of the practice of the martial arts as it pertains to his job and health.

*“I guess what it means to me now, nowadays is still self-protection, it revolves more towards like the energy work side of it I guess you could say, doing in like, self-care, like physical activity kind of thing, cause it’s like being in, doing the work that I do I definitely gotta stay on my energetic levels I was like that helps a lot but it’s also...kinda gotta manage my weight I ain’t 20 something anymore or I’m not even in my teens anymore the weight kinda goes on a little easier than it comes off...and its still about*



*having fun too...nothing makes me giggle like rolling with kids, you're rolling with some almost 20 something...learning for the first time or whatever and helping them out or it's like no, no, no, it's just a little...THAT'S IT (demonstrating an arm bar) there...but like that always toots my horn. I was like that just makes my day a lot of times but yeah, I think that's the most.” (Boomer)*

And Helen speaks to the daily benefits of toleration, stress relief, enjoyment of life in her job and outside of it, and the seeking out of exposure to others who are unlike herself.

*“I’ve become more tolerant of myself thinking differently and I do believe that I have become, I like myself better. I think I enjoy the world more because I have exposed myself to things that I was so uncomfortable with and so that’s a huge part of it to me...it’s made me less obsessive about things. Made me far more relaxed and it’s given me tools to be able to relax...Well I feel like it’s everywhere...the tools associated with meditation are very helpful...it enables you to quiet your mind and see yourself and see what’s important and see what’s not important and how to treat people so I think affects my family life, I think affects my work life and my recreational life the things that appeal to me, my values what I care about so I think that it’s exposed me to lots of ideas from what I had been exposed to and so it meshed well with things that were happening at work. The issues around diversity and inclusion that are such a mess right now and it’s such a heart break and I think I might be more on the sidelines than I am cause I think that not just my work and my exposure to social justice for children in the (state omitted) and US public schools so that’s, not to say that wasn’t I mean my background is special education so I’m already sort of inclined that way but the combining that with the Daoism and the exposure to different ways of thinking have broadened my perspective, my interest in being around people that are different from me. You know I look for people who are different from me and enrich myself so very much when I don’t expose myself to people who are only just like me and think like me.” (Helen)*

Derrick speaks of the daily use of aikido as a way to slow things down,

*“so aikido is a way for me to slow down things. When I’m really cooking on something it’s actually impossible to even record all of the epiphanies which is just as dampening as not having any. So in some ways it might be the inverse for me from a lot of other people, I have to keep presence of mind within the abundance of epiphanies whereas someone else might easily keep their tone and center of mind but have epiphanies and ah-ha milestones less common.” (Derrick)*

And Frank speaks to the full roundness and everything-ness of his practice of the martial arts.

*“[I]t’s everything. It’s what I’m going to do for the rest of my life...I don’t know what I would be doing right now if I wasn’t involved in jujitsu. I don’t know what I did before that, I don’t understand my life, my mindset I don’t know, it brought me back full round. I’m back involved with IRK and everything again working with instructors there with ground work and everything and it’s opened up a whole other set of choices, life choices*

*that are available for me. It's amazing...I used to work security down at the (business name omitted)...I got to use my martial arts quite a bit for that. But I got out of that, there's a whole scuzzy ordeal, people, just not a good place to work, not a good line of work. Other than that I guess it sort of directs my mindset. The books I read definitely...brought about a greater love for my family. More respect for other people, respect for what the human body can do. It brought about confidence and joy. Just even at the darkest times just joy. It brought this feeling of belonging to something to like this exclusive club that nobody else can be a part of unless you know. It gave me, I guess a sense of wonder, it made me feel like a little kid again sometimes. Sorry I already feel like I've lived a rags to riches story." (Frank)*

A particular story that Eric related to me involved a job application and his relating the application process back to his martial arts practice.

*"I know people that try and will tell people they like to do martial arts just cause you get the thug guy that just wants to...prove...something but I recently moved, like I said we just recently moved to (name of city omitted). I do some real estate investing but I needed a second job cause my wife's in college so I'm trying to do both and I applied for a job and he asked me to write a paper on why I thought I would be, it was just a short essay and why I thought I would be a good manager for his store. And the whole paper is on Bushido, it's how I...relate everything I do in life and there's a reason for it based on something I learned in martial arts. And the general manager who interviewed me second just happened to take martial arts himself and completely understood it, the owner had no idea, he was like I don't care what it says but you know the other guy got it." (Eric)*

Eric also speaks to a similar concept of confidence found in other participants' narratives.

*"I mean part of being an advanced martial artist comes from the fact that you don't have to prove anything...two unfortunates...come to a time where I needed to share space with someone so I was living with someone I worked with, she'd actually wrote a check out that she had no permission to and used it to buy some groceries at a store and of course obviously we weren't getting along so when I'd come home my stuff was found out lying outside and the man behind the wall that was hiding to jump out to attack me, I'm 5'10 and 160 pounds, I'm not a big gentleman why you have to hide from me I don't know, yes there was a confrontation, doesn't really matter who won or lost that fight I walked away once I mean I was in a clear safe position I just left. Does it hurt the pride to leave? Yes. Is it still the right thing to do, was it worth going to jail for? No. can I learn to live with having to walk away and with some of the things you had to do to suck up and just walk away, just other things in life are more important? Yes. Does that martial arts that Budo that you know respect for others respect for yourself respect for the earth, things that are more important in life than versus who won a fight and you broke my, I don't even know property, what's more important?" (Eric)*

Finally, Greg's narrative speaks directly to the category of *Living the Day to Day*. In this excerpt from Greg's transcript an "R" indicates responses from Greg and an "I" indicates responses from the interviewer.

*I: ...how you identify as an advanced martial artist?*

*R: To me it's having a respect for those different components that I was talking about earlier...being physically capable of doing the things that an advanced should be able to and maintaining that...I think it's really important...for the rest of the people in that class or in that dojo that see that person maintaining and show that respect for the mind part of it and...not being the one that's picking the fight. Not being the one that has to prove he's the best in the class. Showing the respect for that and then the kind of living in the day to day too...*

*I: living it in the day to day. Can you say a little bit more about that? What that means to you?*

*R: So for me personally one of the things that I really, I guess I don't know if I seek it out or watch for it but I, having been bullied a lot as a kid and been put in those situations I kind of look for those situations in my day to day life and so I think the karate helps with that because it's the idea that no matter how small you are, no matter how new you are you shouldn't feel intimidated or bullied in class and in that environment. It should be a safe environment in that respect and so in life...I think you have an obligation when you are able and capable of helping somebody who maybe in that situation, maybe stick up for somebody who can't stick up for themselves. That's a big part of me, it's not I'm going to go up and show everybody how good I am I'm going to help somebody else who can't help themselves that way. And so some of it's in the respect. Respect for teachers, respect for...the people in your life that again love you and care for you... I guess it really needs to be a complimentary set of values. A lot of people that get in it and stay in it for the right reasons and make karate better, makes them better and that they were already like that and maybe they just needed a little bit of fine tuning in practice to feel comfortable...gives you that confidence to say okay this is wrong and I can step in and say something and it doesn't have to become a big deal. I think sometimes people just need that push, kind of take their own values and make them put them into action and that's what I think any of these martial arts can do for you. It just gives you the confidence to make, to be able to do the right thing when it's hard, when it's difficult...and then...the humility of it cause okay I don't want a trophy for it...I want to walk away from that situation and know you did the right...*

*I: If you had to define your philosophy of the martial arts, what would it be?*

*R: to me it probably goes back to that earlier discussion around...balancing those three pieces you know, making sure that...physically you work on it, mentally you prepare and then spiritually you invest in it. Putting those three pieces together is really important because that to me is what gives you the benefits beyond what happens...for that one hour in class. And then it's taking that and living with it in that day to day. Using whatever you've learned to teach others and help other people out... so combining and balancing those three things and then taking it out and living it in the day to day because so much of that respect and humility is important in everything you do." (Greg)*

The practice of the martial arts as a way of life involves living it in the day to day substance of one's experiences. The narratives of every participant recalled experiences from their daily life and ways in which to live their life that support the category of *Living the Day to Day*. Some of the narratives focused on the physical aspects that can be transferred over to the everyday life outside of the dojo but also the mental and spiritual aspects of practicing the martial arts should be evident and begin to bleed over in the daily routine of life for an advanced martial artist.

**Values.** From narratives of living the day to day experiences of practicing the martial art values emerged from the narratives that form the support for the second category under the theme *Way of Life*. The category of *Values* within the theme *Way of Life* consists of seven sub-categories: (a) *Passion*, (b) *Identity*, (c) *Stress Relief*, (d) *Fit-ness*, (e) *Giving Back*, (f) *Honesty*, and (g) *Respect*. Within each of the sub-categories are variations that support the term used as a sub-category and each of these variations are supported by the participants' narratives.

**Passion.** This sub-category contains variations in the narratives represented by concepts of *Commitment*, *Dedication*, *Discipline*, and *Desire*.

*Commitment.* Helen spoke about her commitment to the society that her martial art is a part of, "*I am extremely loyal to and committed to that protocol and that hierarchy*" (Helen) and her commitment to her practice, "*I make myself do it...that discipline and the ah ha recognition of how much benefit there is that you get from it...has made me realize that it's not a burden, it's not a drudge it's a commitment. That I want to nurture and take care of*" (Helen).

*Dedication.* As a variation of the sub-category *Passion*, *Dedication* can be seen in Helen's narrative about practice,

*"They aren't willing to come on Saturday morning at 8:30 a half hour before class starts and practice with me, that's okay I'm going to be, I'll get there in time to run myself*

*through lo cup, I'll do it at home, I'll stumble over my furniture, I'll make way I'll figure it out but at 10 o'clock and I'm in my pajamas and it's that first 100 days and I go ahh, and I'll stop at the foot of my bed and I will...it's very external but it's just rehearsing it, it's taking my, but I make myself do it..." (Helen)*

Derrick also spoke to dedication as being an aspect of being an advanced martial artist,

*"You had to show a dedication to knowing how to attack and protect yourself as you attack. I would think within the combination of those two technical aspects those the two things the advanced student is capable of or requires them to be labeled as advanced student. And also I believe that there is, you've given part of yourself to the dojo...you do the smallest job, no job is too big or too small so that what needs to be done for the group falls clearly between the ranks that you're willing to do anything that jobs aren't beneath you." (Derrick)*

*Discipline.* This variation is mentioned prominently throughout Eric and Ian's narratives.

Eric views it as a way of life in relation to self-discipline taught to him as a value by his sensei and how that carries over to the values that he wants to instill in others,

*"I want to volunteer at like an orphanage and teach them martial arts and as an entrepreneur as well be able to teach them that I came from nothing, I grew up with nothing, especially once my parents got divorced I thought I was middle class but I was actually poor when my parents were married, my parents got divorced I was real poor. But I've never stopped trying, I've never given up, I'm still trying today to get to where I want to and again that goes back to my martial arts that self-discipline, that not giving up you can achieve anything that self-confidence in oneself that no matter what the world tells you, you can do what you want or you should at least never give up, try to get there. And I definitely know kids at an orphanage think everybody's given up on them so I mean that would be a place that I would love to focus my time on in the future." (Eric)*

Ian views *Discipline* as both a value that the martial arts will instill in the practitioner but also a value that as an advanced student must be brought to the practice, or put another way the martial art can only give you so much before you must give back to it.

*"I think the first one...is always discipline. Martial arts will help instill that in you because a lot of it is listening to your teacher, going through repetitious motions over and over again, to eventually achieve a goal of being able to do a technique...At some point you have to start bringing your own discipline into it. Because going to class every day, going to practice however many times you can go a week, that requires a certain amount of self-discipline, it's very easy just to say nope I'm done and not go again. So martial arts both to me instills and requires discipline." (Ian)*



*Desire.* This variation is talked about most strongly in Ian's narrative as a yearning to learn more. However, it is also evident in other narratives focusing on similar aspects of life-long learning.

*"I have some experience and I'm continuing to grow that experience but a lot of that comes from a very intense desire to know more. I have a very constant need to learn about martial arts, as much as I can as often as I can...I'm an advanced martial artist because I'm going to keep doing this and I'm going to keep learning, I'm going to expand my knowledge base and I'm going to expand my experience no matter what. A beginner may not have that desire, a teacher and leader obviously has that and they're on that path already, advanced is where to me that's where people start to make that decision of yeah this is going to be...something that I keep with me for the rest of my life."* (Ian)

The sub-category of *Passion* expresses a need and focus to continue the practice of the martial arts for advanced martial artists. This passion begins to bleed over into life outside of the dojo and also into one's identity. This affects not just identity as a martial artist but as a person and how they interact with their world.

***Identity.*** *Identity* as a sub-category of *Values* contains four variations in the participant's narratives. These variations are: (a) *Confidence*, (b) *Empowering*, (c) *Foundation*, and (d) *Self-Betterment*.

*Confidence.* Confidence was repeatedly mentioned in everyone's narratives, primarily focusing on giving the participant confidence in themselves to act according to their other values, "you like to think you'd still be able to do that and gives you that confidence to say okay this is wrong and I can step in and say something...It just gives you the confidence...to be able to do the right thing when it's hard, when it's difficult" (Greg) or confidence in their ability to protect themselves or others, "it gives you the confidence that you need, not likely to happen in this day and age but if it ever did you'd be, you could at least protect yourself, protect your family, and there's that" (Greg). Confidence was also mentioned in relation to having the ability to

recognize that as an advanced martial artist there is nothing that you must prove to anyone in regards of conflict or confrontation.

*“[T]hat self-respect, the confidence that brings that up is the whole idea of fighting is not the fight. My sensei will tell me all the time that the fact you studied with me for 10 years and you get in a fight and you walk away you learned something. Like yeah, best way not to get hit, don’t be there. And I’m like doesn’t just mean moving away from the punch it means leaving the confrontation just sorting out how to avoid the confrontation. Usually it’s more important than anything else is cut off how to avoid confrontation.” (Frank)*

In Frank’s narrative, confidence was tied to his identity in relation to joy that the martial arts brings to him. It *“brought about a greater love for my family. More respect for other people, respect for what the human body can do. It brought about confidence and joy. Just even at the darkest times just joy” (Frank).*

*Empowering.* This variation of *Identity* was salient in Boomer’s narrative as a way to overcome bullying and not wanting to feel helpless.

*“[I]t’s like a crappy feeling, feeling like...feeling helpless or like...gonna get beat up so that’s kind of where a lot of that started was...being like I wanna...like those old milk commercials I’m gonna drink my milk and get big and strong and nobodies gonna stop me.” (Boomer)*

Anna also spoke to how being an advanced martial artist was empowering her in the interactions she could potentially have against larger attackers.

*“[Y]ou don’t necessarily have to be the stronger person or the heavier person, if you apply the technique correctly you can still have advantage over a person, that made me feel more confident about feeling that I could protect myself and I really liked that...I started to like picture like if I was walking out at night and I thought I see a guy over there if he were to like approach me or attack me I have these plans in my head of what I could try, that made me feel really happy when I already started feeling confident about self-defense and now because of doing that I don’t have hardly any worries about not knowing a single thing to do if I were ever approached, not that I would ever want that, it would still be terrifying especially if there were a weapon involved.” (Anna)*

And Christine similarly spoke about the confidence and empowering aspects of practicing the martial arts.

*“[I]t was because it gave off this I’m not a victim, I’m not going to be a victim, you can touch me and then you’re going to regret it. And so I didn’t have to prove it and that was nice because I gave off this confidence where I was I do know what I’m doing and I don’t need to prove it to you but if I have to then I will.” (Christine)*

*Foundation.* This variation of *Identity* spoke to how the practice of the martial arts gave the participants a foundation to build upon to make them who they are. Derrick spoke to this foundation in relation to techniques that one should understand well in order to be an advanced martial artist, *“you need to know the core techniques...foundational controls...foundational four or five techniques”* (Derrick). He went on to elaborate how these foundations could be considered as *“milestones are places where metaphorically...you can rest for a while...that you understand well enough to use it to move on to what’s next”* (Derrick).

*Self-Betterment.* This variation of *Identity* speaks to the constant need of improvement of the self as a precondition for an advanced martial artist. Ian stated,

*“My philosophy of the martial arts is a need for self-betterment, a constant need to find improvement in myself and I have to be uncomfortable...when I’m practicing...if I come to a practice, I come to martial arts at any point in time and I’m just comfortable I’m not doing it right. I’m not experiencing as well as I could. I also, this is kind of hard to put into words, a lot of people approach martial arts...as a way to make themselves stronger over other people, they see it as a means to elevate themselves in a physical manner above other people, like I can do this so now I’m stronger than everyone else out there, so now I’m more skilled than everyone else out there...to me that’s the wrong way to look at it. The only person that I’m stronger than, the only person that I’m more skilled than is the guy I was yesterday. So all I’m ever trying to do, the only person that I’m ever trying to beat, the only person that I’m trying to one up is the guy that woke up yesterday...As long as I’m better than the man that woke up the day before me I’m moving forward and that’s to me that’s the only way I can approach the martial arts.” (Ian)*

The identity of an advanced martial artist does not simply mean the role or who they are within the dojo walls. Their identity as an advanced martial artist should extend beyond the dojo into their everyday life, it should permeate into every facet of their being and represent who they are at a fundamental level.



***Stress Relief.*** This sub-category of *Values* is supported by a single variation, *Catharsis*. The implications of the stress relief applications of the martial arts have previously been spoken to in other areas, primarily through Helen and Greg's narratives. However, the variation of *Catharsis*, to support this as a sub-category, comes from Frank and Christine's narratives. Frank responds to the question of his philosophy of the martial arts as, "[I]t's therapy in the greatest sense" (Frank). This therapeutic effect stems from his earlier accounting of how his practice of the martial arts has become everything to him, through his struggles he has found a sense of belonging and purpose. Christine's narrative speaks to her practice of the martial arts as a way to relieve stress in her daily life. However, what makes her story one of catharsis stems from, like Frank, a place of struggle and tribulation to one of comfortableness and an ability to work through it.

*"I have a man who tried to assault me essentially and to try and make it comfortable with that and accept that you know I do know how to defend myself, I can defend myself, and then with jujitsu it's you know there's different times where you have someone who's sitting on you or we're practicing with someone whose hands are around your throat and it's...what do you do in that situation and you're trying to breathe through it like this is not real, this is okay, everything's okay, and then you continue to practice and eventually at least for me those feelings just kind of stopped happening so it was nice cause...you're just working through everything."* (Christine)

The catharsis experienced in these two narratives was also experienced to some degree in the other participant's stories. This release of repressed feelings and emotions through the embodied practice of the martial arts led to immediate and continued stress relief for the participants.

***Fit-ness.*** *Fit-ness* as a sub-category is supported by four variations: (a) *Fun*, (b) *Joy*, (c) *Love*, and (d) *Belonging*. These variations speak to the way the martial arts are the correct and proper fit for each participant. The term also describes how it met them at the place where they were in their life, intersecting with potential paths of divergence.

*Fun and Joy.* The variation of *Fun* was mentioned in many of the narratives, typically in a similar vein to *Joy*. Helen spoke about the practice of the martial arts as being fun because,

*“I look for people who are different from me and enrich myself so very much when I don’t expose myself to people who are only just like me and think like me, so if you were to see us at the practice hall you would see lots of very different people from different walks of life and it’s just fun to not have everybody look and think and talk and dress alike.”*  
(Helen)

She also spoke to values that a martial artist should exhibit as “enjoyment” (Helen). Christine incorporated the variation of *Fun* throughout her narrative, specifically focusing on the change from the initial stress relief to a fun activity,

*“I had, bad experiences in the past and so learning how to defend myself and things like that really initially it was exercise and this would be fun and stuff like that and it turned into this would be really useful if I’m in a bad situation again...especially with the school that I’m at right now my training partners are wonderful and so it’s just fun to go with them and learn from them and train with them and chat and you know we’re having fun while we’re doing it.”* (Christine)

*Belonging.* Finally, Frank spoke to every variation of *Fit-ness* throughout his narrative. *Fun* initially was during his father’s martial arts classes that he taught, “it was a whole lot of fun it was like recess on Friday nights, it was awesome” (Frank). *Joy, Love, and Belonging* came through his re-telling of what values the change through the martial arts brought on for him as an advanced martial artist.

*“[B]rought about a greater love for my family. More respect for other people, respect for what the human body can do. It brought about confidence and joy. Just even at the darkest times just joy. It brought this feeling of belonging to something to like this exclusive club that nobody else can be a part of unless you know. It gave me, I guess a sense of wonder, it made me feel like a little kid again sometimes.”* (Frank)

*Fit-ness* as a *Value* of the theme *Way of Life* for an advanced martial artist means that the practice of the martial arts is something that one enjoys doing, something that one loves to do. It instills a sense of belonging to something greater than yourself that is unique to those who also practice the martial arts. Not all martial arts will be the right fit and you have to shop around to

find the right place (Boomer). But, when you do find that right place an advanced martial artist will know it, it will fit them. *Fit-ness* for an advanced martial artist is determined by “*what you want to make of it*” (Boomer). The practice of the martial arts can fit to anyone and anyone to it, it is not something that is forced but rather something that one comes to know.

***Giving Back.*** This sub-category of *Values* within the theme *Way of Life* deals with the way that each of the participants spoke about a compulsion to teach, to give back. This sub-category could easily have been associated with the theme *Interaction*, but instead of focusing on the interaction that takes place through teaching it aligns with the theme *Way of Life* by illustrating the feeling that an advanced martial artist should embody. There are three variations that support this need to give back: (a) *Teaching*, (b) *Learning*, and (c) *Responsibility*.

The three variations are listed individually but act as a holistic concept, with an attempt to describe and separate each missing the mark. Therefore, the excerpts presented here best reflect this connected relationship. Teaching, for an advanced martial artist, was seen by many of the participants as a dual responsibility. They took responsibility for teaching properly and were responsible for their own learning to improve their teaching in order to better understand what they were teaching. Eric spoke deeply about the sub-category of *Giving Back*. Most salient is his desire to give back to children, especially orphans in the future.

*“I mean I want to own a school someday so I mean they always say if you don’t want to work a day in your life do something you’re passionate about...what I’m passionate about is martial arts and me and my wife have always talked about this, if I want to open up a dojo someday, want to teach, want to give back...I know there is kids out there like me that need a father figure instead of being big brother big sister owning a school, I would if I could have the time and money I want to volunteer at like an orphanage and teach them martial arts...I grew up with nothing...But I’ve never stopped trying, I’ve never given up, I’m still trying today to get to where I want to and again that goes back to my martial arts that self-discipline, that not giving up you can achieve anything that self-confidence in oneself that no matter what the world tells you, you can do what you want or you should at least never give up, try to get there. And I definitely know kids at an*

*orphanage think everybody's given up on them so I mean that would be a place that I would love to focus my time on in the future."* (Eric)

Derrick spoke to *Giving Back* in relation to his current teaching and struggles that he wrestles with when teaching. In this excerpt from Derrick's transcript an "R" indicates responses from Derrick and an "I" indicates responses from the interviewer.

*"R: for me it's, a bunch of the battle that I was just discussing which is to be flooded by ideas that might strengthen the conceptual understanding of the student or is it to repeat the same things I heard my instructor say over and over again? Which although they are not in themselves uninteresting or dull, my mind tends to find new ways of saying it. So I'm embroiled in a battle to be quiet and let them find it for themselves but also create new ways of thinking about it. Also to be, to break through their comfortability level a bit helps to show them how meek they're being and how much more, how being more expressive will help. Much like your discussion of a kiai expressing use of your energy, so I find that my strength is in changing the wording of what I've, the way I've been taught and to which I don't know that's in the best interest of my students or not*

*I: well are you changing the wording of what you were taught to help them or to help you?*

*R: I think it's both. I've always learned things in terms of how I would teach them. so whether its drawing which was my forays into mastery of something which I've never reached a mastery of towards that or writing which in itself is the, is organized thought. Now aikido I teach myself with regard to an internal monologue that is teaching another so teaching has a special meaning for me because it is the language of my thoughts."* (Derrick)

Ian spoke to *Giving Back* in a manner similar to the concept of generativity. He concerned himself with this concept focusing on making sure that there are new martial artists coming up behind him.

*"[T]he only way that I can help the rest of the world to feel that is to be responsible, is to be responsible for helping others learn. I need to do that I absolutely need to help other people train at some point...I need to make sure that my own training continues and that I can grow as a martial artist but I can't do that alone and I shouldn't do that alone and no one should do that alone. No one should train in a bubble, no one should train for themselves alone. If your only training for yourself, if you have no interest in furthering the martial arts beyond yourself then all you're doing is taking something. All you're doing is absorbing something and then holding that forever in that bubble. And there's no use in that. There's no use in someone taking something and then just walking away with it and I don't ever want to do that. I feel a lot of responsibility to help train other people. I feel, honestly from my own personal experience I do feel like I could do with some more training of my own and I could do with some more experience before I'm*

*capable of being a good instructor but I'm past my beginner steps. I'm past my first 100 steps. So if I'm not helping other people begin that 1000 year that 1000 step journey then I'm not really learning. I'm missing out on part of what it means to be in the martial arts. It's one of the few traditions that I think we need to continue, that I think needs to carry on because I think that those three virtues that I believe it instills, humility, honesty and discipline we need to continue giving that to people. We need to continue teaching that to people.” (Ian)*

Helen was concerned with her responsibility to learn as much as she could, not for herself but for those that she teaches.

*“I have exposed myself to and been a student of the society as well as the sets. I have taken upon myself to practice on my own in my own home as a dual purpose to improve the, get the health benefits of tai chi for myself and in my sense of obligation as an instructor so if an instructor comes, a workshop instructor comes to town and spends three days with us then everyone's seeing the exact same instruction that I have but I have an additional responsibility to make sure that I grasp it as well as I possibly can. So I'm going to need to practice at home and make sure I've written notes down and can keep track of what did the instructor say, how did they do it, what did they tell us to focus on so that I can remind myself and my students how to do that.” (Helen)*

Another aspect of Helen's narrative that speaks to this sub-category comes from her desire to ensure the comfortableness of those around her at the camps that she attends.

*“So the opportunity to not be selfish or irritated with circumstances like that, when I first started going to these workshops or even our big classes, I would find myself really annoyed if somebody got in my space, lined up too close to me, I'd go get in line and take care of myself and make sure I had a good space, now it's far more does everybody have room, can we, what can I do to accommodate more space for you so that that's when I say I think it's made me, it hasn't made me a good person necessarily it's made me a better person than I was, I think and more aware of people and other people's needs, not just looking out for myself.” (Helen)*

*Giving Back* as a sub-category of *Values* in the theme *Way of Life* focused on how the participants not only thought about but enacted in their daily lives the variations of *Giving Back*: (a) *Teaching*, (b) *Learning*, and (c) *Responsibility*. This was not simply focused on the teaching aspect that was a part of all of the narratives, but the compulsions the participants felt to give back to others what was given to them through their own experiences throughout their practice of

the martial arts. Through the experiences of the participants *Giving Back* became a value for how they live their lives or as Greg stated, “*living it in the day to day*” (Greg).

**Honesty.** This sub-category of *Values* within the theme *Way of Life* is supported by two sub-categories, (a) *Humility* and (b) *Openness*.

*Humility.* Ian spoke about being honest with himself as it corresponds to how he practices and for what reasons he practices the martial arts.

*“I also, this is kind of hard to put into words, a lot of people approach martial arts as a...way to make themselves stronger over other people...The only person that I’m stronger than, the only person that I’m more skilled than is the guy I was yesterday...As long as I’m better than the man that woke up the day before me I’m moving forward...When you’re broken down and can’t go forward and martial arts needs that from you, martial arts needs you to feel humble. Needs you to understand you’re not always going to be at the top. So discipline and humility to me are probably the two greatest virtues that any martial artist can learn and need in themselves.” (Ian)*

Ian also spoke to the humbleness and humility that accompany martial arts practice and how it carries over into being a way of life.

*“One virtue that...I think about a lot is honesty but I mean that in a kind of specific way. In that you have to be honest with what you can do, with what your martial arts can do, with what martial arts as a whole can do. A lot of people approach martial arts as this very almost mythological thing...they can do things beyond what you can do sure...that just comes from time and dedication to a craft. A carpenter can do unbelievable things with a piece of wood but that’s just because of his time and dedication to the craft...Martial arts is not...mystical, it’s not mythological, and it’s the practice of using the human body, of expressing oneself through the human body...You need honesty to say no I can’t dodge bullets...no I can’t slice a man in half with my hand, no I can’t scale a wall barehanded...No I can’t take on 20 guys and come out unscathed. No I can’t take on one guy and come out uninjured...that’s not true and it’s easy to delude yourself...it’s absolutely necessary if you’re really going to be a martial artist if you’re really going to dedicate years and decades to this sort of training to be honest with it” (Ian)*

Greg spoke to the humility that advanced martial artists should display outside of the dojo context.

*“[I was] in a situation where we were on our way to Walmart or Target or something and my wife and I, a little baby girl and this mother was just wailing away on this kid and I, it’s like just people standing there looking at her like, and I just walked up to her and say*



*hey you don't need to do that and she was going to wail away on me too if I wasn't careful. But she, it was just, it wasn't a confrontation, it was kind of like and the poor little girl, she was crying and like look just take a deep breath and walk away from it and it will be fine...you just have to interrupt, kind of have to short circuit that process...stick up for somebody and let that person know you can't do that, you can't do that with this poor kid who can't defend herself and so you do that stuff...having gone through the study...it's not even a physical conflict...I wasn't worried, if it had been a...big football player maybe I would have gone differently. You know you like to think you'd still be able to do that and gives you that confidence to say okay this is wrong and I can step in and say something and it doesn't have to become a big deal. I think sometimes people just need that push, kind of take their own values and make them put them into action and that's what I think any of these martial arts can do for you. It just gives you the confidence...to be able to do the right thing when it's hard, when it's difficult...and then...the humility of it cause okay I don't want a trophy for it, I don't want anyone to say anything about it I want to walk away from that situation and know you did the right thing and being even more comfortable the next time that happens.” (Greg)*

Frank spoke to being humble in a manner that many of the other participants did as well. He felt humble in the face of teaching, believing that he was not at the level to teach masterfully, even with years of experience.

*“I think the only thing I really like about it is being able to give people the chance to be as happy as I am with it. But I don't feel that I'm at the level that I should be to teach it masterfully. There's a certain way I feel like that professors that they articulate that they do things that I'm just not at that level yet, I can't get the same point across.” (Frank)*

This humbleness in the face of the responsibility of teaching shows a maturity that comes with experience as many of the other participants felt similar to Frank. This will be an area of discussion in Chapter Five because it brings to light an assumption that I had not accounted for going into the study, that there may be more than a single type of advanced martial artist classification.

*Openness.* Eric spoke to *Openness* through the concept of being open minded, especially in relation to how martial arts can be similar, in his view, to some religions that can be closed minded.

*“[C]losed minded but a martial art can be that way too...you have to be open minded that if you go to a school that says you can only learn karate here and nowhere else you can't*

*even visit another dojo because they might teach you differently, leave, find a different instructor that's not a good instructor, if you go to a church and they say you can't believe anything other than what you're told right here and you can't be friends with anybody but the people that are in here, leave.” (Eric)*

Helen experienced Openness in how she changed her appreciation of the workshops that she attends.

*“Patience with yourself and with each other. Openness...to a new way of doing things. Tolerance of change, so the moves we go to workshops and we get upgrades on the way we do the moves and so recognizing that there's not one precise right way but that there are developing ways and that no one is trying to make you pull your hair out so welcoming change...not just tolerating it. Enjoyment, enjoyment. Taking care of each other. That comes in the instructional style it comes in the cultural exchange so when we learn how to serve tea we learn how to serve each other before we serve ourselves, family style dining, we learn to serve each other, we might rather pass the food but we don't do it that way we, somebody takes care of serving. And we're almost stepping over each other to see who can be the most helpful sometimes.” (Helen)*

Participants spoke to *Honesty* as a sub-category of *Values* in the theme *Way of Life* primarily through being humble in your everyday interactions. They also expressed it through not seeking rewards for doing the right thing and being open with yourself and those around you about your feelings and intentions. *Honesty* primarily involves not lying to yourself about your abilities or reasons for practicing the martial arts and for an advanced martial artist should carry over into other facets of your life.

**Respect.** This sub-category of *Values* within the theme *Way of Life* is the final concept to discuss in phase five. *Respect* is supported by the variation of *Patience* which distinguishes it from other concepts discussed within different themes. The *Respect* brought forth through the participants' narratives relays a respect for the martial art style, patience and tolerance with the self, and can be thought of as a journey. Helen spoke to respect for her style of tai chi.

*“I have exposed myself to and been a student of the society...I stay true to the guidance that I get from the society and so I think that probably more than what I would physically look like to you if you ask me to demonstrate my tai chi probably more my sense of commitment to the society structure and protocol is the fact that that is as important to*



*me as...I think I've got some instruction you really need I need to give you a correction so and recognizing corrections as gifts rather than as criticisms and I am still not advanced in being completely skilled enough to give gifts in a way that they are received as gifts rather than criticism or ridicule.” (Helen)*

Greg, on the other hand spoke about respect that came from the right atmosphere while training.

*“To me the most, the piece of respect is important because we've lost so much of that in today's society in general. And then being able to work with the kids and work with...partners in the class...and if you do it right and you have the right attitude and the teacher handles it correctly sort of that what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas idea, it's like what happens in the dojo stays in here, you beat the crap out of each other for an hour and then you leave and then that all goes away. You don't carry that out with you.” (Greg)*

He also spoke about showing “that respect for the mind part” (Greg) of the triangle of training the mind, body, and spirit.

Finally, Eric spoke about respect in relation to how one should live their life.

*“I don't per say have a philosophy of the martial arts, I just I guess I have a philosophy of life and it probably comes from my martial arts but also being Indian a lot of that plays in a role that...we believe in a higher being but that higher being's technically mother earth for us. Our religious is more spiritual versus religious in just the way that we should treat everything. That starts with plants and animals and the ocean let alone your dogs and your neighbors. So it's just treating yourself, our earth and people with respect that it deserves.” (Eric)*

*Patience.* This sub-category of *Respect* and variation of *Patience* are best displayed through Ian and Derrick's narratives. The respect for the martial arts as a way of life only comes with a “1000 step journey” and you may only be past your “first 100 steps” (Ian). But this journey may also be viewed as Derrick described it.

*“[It would] be as if you were staring at a new city for the first time. The new city seems to be something in chaos, not something in order but as you travel and make your circuit, become more familiar with the city you realize that its extremely, it is order, it's just not, it's just invisible” (Derrick)*

The journey requires a patience that only comes with practice and the respect that is instilled through an embodied format and eventually becomes a way of life.

The theme *Way of Life* was a constant across the participants' narratives, with it being mentioned specifically in this exact phrasing in Boomer, Frank, Eric, Ian, Greg, and Helen's narratives. Taking into consideration the two categories and numerous sub-categories and variations that accompany this theme I have chosen to draw upon the participant's experiences and define the theme *Way of Life* as follows.

*“The martial arts is a way of life. A way that is less about fighting and more about avoiding the fight. It is a way to implement your values at the proper moment to do the right thing. It means living these values in the day to day and taking responsibility for your actions. The martial arts is a way of life that becomes who you are, it is everything.”*

All four themes have been described and defined, with support from the narratives to lend a rationale for the categories, sub-categories, and variations that prop up each theme. These definitions are not meant to be the only way to define these themes but rather have been designed to epitomize the experiences of the participants of this study. The next phase will represent the themes and data.

### **Phase Six: Re-presentation of Analyzed Data and Themes**

Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of analysis led to the representation of the analyzed data and themes. In phase three I presented a short vignette that represented the co-constructed narrative of the participants' interviews. Initially, in phase six, I planned to present a grand narrative that could fit every interview touching on all of the themes, categories, sub-categories, and variations that emerged from the analysis. However, through the six-phase process of analysis I realized that a grand narrative of advanced martial artists would not accurately represent the richness of diversity and similarities inherent in the narratives, it would fall short of honoring their experiences and the interconnectedness of the themes. So, I decided to present a model represented in Figure 4 that portrays the analyzed data in a fluid manner, more

befitting the narratives of the participants. This model represents a way to highlight the intricacies of the connections that exist through each theme as is evidenced by the many excerpts that overlap each other in phase five. This model was chosen as a way to more easily digest the multitude and variations of connections in the themes from the first five phases of analysis from a Western mindset, fulfilling one of the goals of the theoretical framework to help Western audiences understand non-Western ways of knowing.

This change also fits with the theoretical framework that was used to frame this study. The embodied narrative knowing theoretical framework is based on the interaction of social constructivism, narrative knowing, and embodied knowing around the central role of experience. The way these paradigms interact is not in a static or linear manner. They flow in and through each other, around and between their ontological and epistemological viewpoints. This fluidity between the paradigms illustrates the dynamic nature of change and transformation. This allowance for change in the theoretical framework justifies the change to the final presentation of the analyzed data from a grand narrative to a model of the themes.

The figure I have chosen to represent the themes that emerged from the analysis of the narratives is a double strand helix of DNA. The model of DNA represents an accessible concept for Western and non-Western audiences who are familiar with the concept of DNA and genetics, a model that is easily recognizable and clearly defined. The two outside strands of the model that run vertically represent the individual and the experiences of practicing the martial arts. The connecting strands that run horizontally represent the themes that emerged from the analysis.

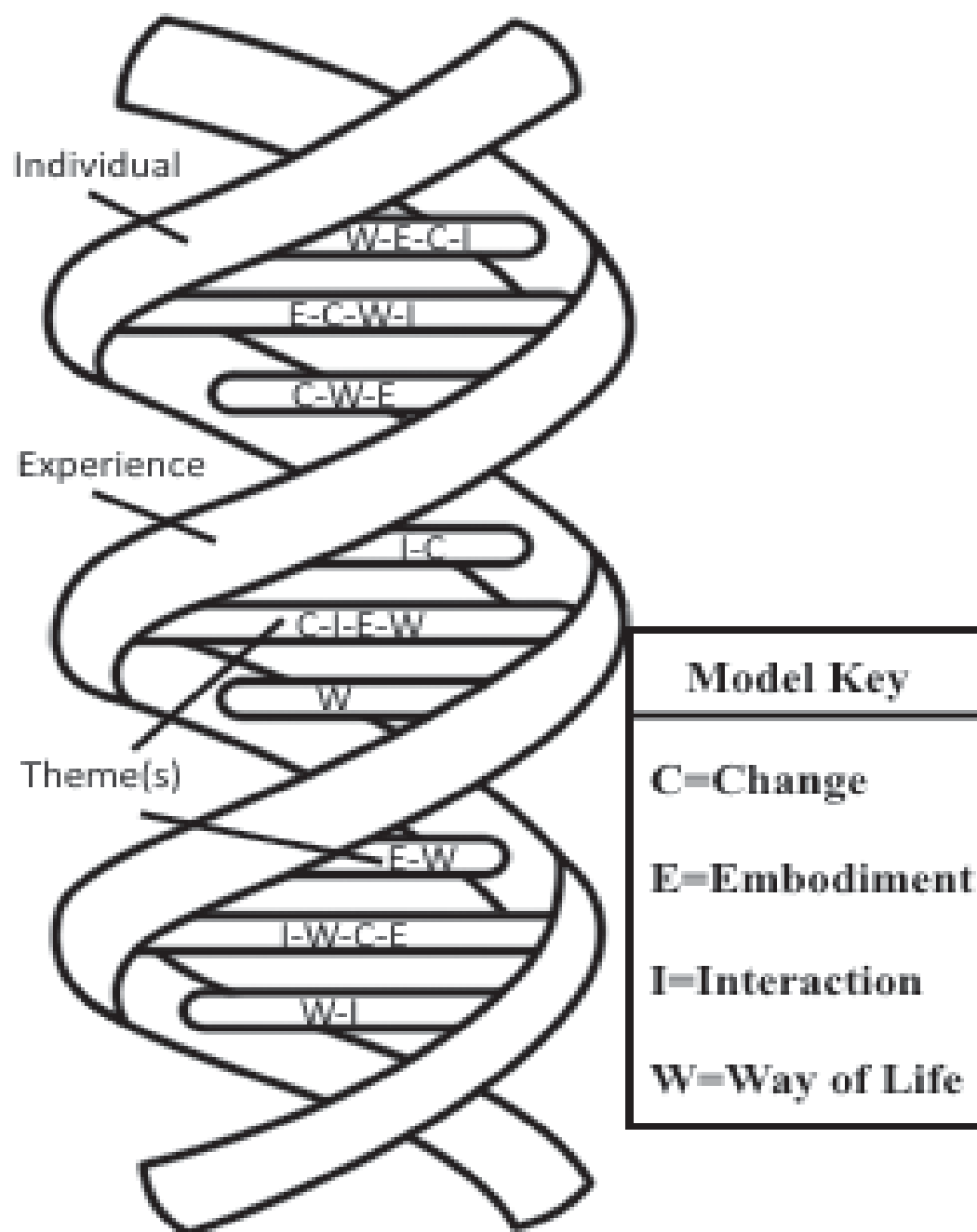


Figure 4 *CEIW Thematic Model* (Scarterfield, 2015 permission for use received 2017 and image modified by Overton, 2017)

The themes are represented by the beginning letter of each with: **C** representing *Change*, **E** representing *Embodiment*, **I** representing *Interaction*, and **W** representing *Way of Life*.

The two vertical strands are representative of the participant and their experiences that we co-constructed through the interview process. Just as DNA are the building blocks of life so too is it the building blocks of the participants' stories of being an advanced martial artist. The horizontal connecting strands are the representation of the themes that emerged as a result of my analysis of the narratives. These themes showed a remarkable amount of independence and interdependence from each other. In some narratives the analysis of the themes was capable of standing on their own as a solitary monument in the participant's narrative, while in others the themes were inextricable from each of the other themes embrace. The model of DNA allows the representation of the endless ways that the themes interacted on differing levels. Each theme listed on the model includes the entirety of the categories and sub-categories that comprise it and support the definition that I created for the theme. However, it does not have to include every category and sub-category of each theme. This model highlights that all four themes do not have to be present at the same time to represent an experience that comprises the advanced martial artist's story.

### **Summary**

Chapter Four presents the findings of my analysis of the co-constructed narratives. This analysis utilized Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phase thematic analysis to order the comprehensive thematic narrative analysis, introduced in Chapter Three, which attempts to keep the participant's stories whole and intact rather than have their experiences become disembodied fragments of text floating in the ether. These six phases are:

1. Immersion in the data and beginning coding

2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes
  - a. Emplotment of narratives
4. Review of data
  - a. Exploration of patterns
  - b. Refining themes across all data
5. Define and name themes
  - a. Providing extracts to support definitions and names
6. Re-presentation of analyzed data and themes

Phase one began with a description of how I immersed myself within the data to begin the coding phase. This immersion began with the transcription of each of the interviews within a Microsoft document. Following the transcription were multiple readings of the interviews in conjunction with my research journal and any notes that I made during the participant's interviews. An anomaly that occurred during this phase, which will be discussed in Chapter Five, came from my research journal where I noted since I was the only participant who identified as a person of color there was a potential for less generalizability, trustworthiness, and awkwardness within the study.

Phase two began the initial coding, according to Braun and Clarke's (2006) model. All interviews were hand coded and followed the same procedure, outlined in Table 3. There were two steps to the coding that took place, pre-coding which signified an important piece of data by highlighting, underlining, or circling and eclectic or first impression coding in relation to the questions of the interview guide and those that were produced organically through the interview (Saldana, 2016).

Phase three consisted of searching for themes and considering how the analysis of “different codes may combine to form overarching theme[s]” (p. 19). Because of the similarities of overarching themes and aspects of emplotment, phase three was where I began the process of re-presenting the co-constructed narrative. This re-presentation was a vignette, which was brief but evocative, containing what I analyzed as important through our co-construction of their narrative. They contained elements of plot, specifically a beginning, middle, and end. The vignettes also contained the personal, spacial, and temporal considerations brought to the analysis process through Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) three-dimensional space. Accompanying these vignettes were the themes, categories, sub-categories, and variations that emerged and were combined through the second phase of analysis.

Phase four of Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six phase model promoted reviewing the themes that had been generated through phases one, two, and three. This review was broken down into two levels of refining the themes. The first level was reviewing the themes that had been generated. And the second level was refining of the themes. This refinement was similar to the process of review, but it was applied to the entire data set. Table 14 provided an example of the spreadsheet process that I utilized for this phase. Finally, the refinement process was condensed into a table, which was then broken down into a list of themes, categories, and sub-categories.

Phase five focused on naming and defining the themes that emerged as a result of Braun and Clarke’s (2006) process. This meant providing extracts from the transcripts that supported the definitions and names given to the themes that were selected. This phase described the themes and categories and subcategories contained within each theme, providing data for support. At the end of each theme I provided a definition for the theme which incorporated the essence of the categories and sub-categories that compose it. These definitions are derived from

the participants' experiences as told to me through our co-constructed narratives. These definitions are not meant to be the only way to define these themes but rather have been designed to epitomize the experiences of the participants of this study.

The definition of the theme *Change* is:

*Change or transformation is a fundamental component of the experience of practicing the martial arts and becoming an advanced student. Change occurs over time and with experiences gained from practice, interaction with others, and movement.*

The definition of *Embodiment* is:

*Embodiment means to learn through all of the possible processes that your body can learn through, together. This includes the cognitive, rational, spiritual, emotional, physical, and others. However, it does not state that this learning occurs independently but rather in conjunction with each other way of learning. Embodiment is about learning as a whole person, not just individual pieces.*

The definition of the theme *Interaction* is:

*Interaction does not occur in a vacuum, but rather in relation to an Other. The other in the interaction may be the imagined other or real and physical other of a partner. The interaction with the Other is both verbal and non-verbal, both felt and heard. This interaction has profound effects on the advanced martial artist and the Other, developing further and deeper with each episode. The interaction is reciprocal, and mutually benefits all parties involved, even though the benefit may not be evident at the time of interaction. An advanced martial artist regards the interaction between themselves and the Other as Teacher to be of important significance, more so than the martial art that is practiced.*

The definition of the theme *Way of Life* is:

*"The martial arts are a way of life. A way that is less about fighting and more about avoiding the fight. It is a way to implement your values at the proper moment to do the right thing. It means living these values in the day to day and taking responsibility for your actions. The martial arts are a way of life that becomes who you are, it is everything."*

Phase six reflected on the process of using Braun and Clarke's (2006) model of analysis and spoke about the changes that occurred during the analysis process. The re-presentation of the analysis transformed from a grand narrative about what it meant to be an advanced martial



artist to the presentation of a model, based on the double helix of DNA, which better represented and honored the analysis process as well as the participants' stories.

Chapter Five concludes the dissertation. It will provide an overview of the study as well as an overview of the major findings from the analysis. I will discuss how the findings support literature in both the field of martial arts research and adult learning. Next will be a discussion about the embodied narrative knowing theoretical framework and how the study has provided a solid foundation to begin further exploration in future research studies as well as implications this study may have on the practice of the martial arts and teaching. Finally, I will discuss surprises that emerged throughout the entirety of this study and implications for future research.

## **CHAPTER FIVE CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION**

Chapter Five contains an overview of the purpose of this study, the procedures followed, and the major findings that emerged from this study. The chapter ends with a conclusion and discussion section which contains the surprises and outliers from the study, how the findings tie into the literature, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this narrative study was to explore adult learners' lived experiences of learning and practicing martial arts in the southeastern United States of America. The two research questions that guided this study are: (a) What experience(s) led the adult learner to the martial arts? and (b) What is the adult learner's experience(s) of learning and practicing the martial arts? In the modern era, the field of Western adult education (i.e., specifically American perspectives) has been shifting toward a global focus, retraining adult learners and educating for global competencies (Merriam & Brockett, 2007). In order to facilitate this new direction in adult learning and education strategies, an understanding of non-Western perspectives on the foundations of adult learning and education within an expanding global community is needed (Merriam, 2007). Non-Western perspectives are defined as having their "roots in cultures and...traditions that pre-date Western colonization, modernization, and Western-driven globalization (Merriam, 2007, p. 173). The focus on martial arts for this study was selected due to its nature as a non-Western practice, which has steadily gained exposure and popularity in the West.

There is no agreed upon theoretical framework to study the martial arts, as is evidenced by the eclectic approaches that have been used for prior research about the martial arts and other non-Western practices. To establish a beginning, I chose to create a theoretical framework that

consists of three established paradigms for support. The rationale for creating a new theoretical framework stemmed from the fact that each of the three paradigms selected to form this framework addressed an aspect of the purpose of this study, but in my opinion inadequately failed to create a holistic picture of the experience of practicing the martial arts as individual theoretical paradigms. Embodied learning, social constructivism, and narrative knowing were selected to frame the study in a way that allowed for a holistic interpretation of the participants' experiences to be front and center. Each of these paradigms were selected for the primary emphasis that they place on the role of experience as central to the meaning making process. A model of the embodied narrative knowing theoretical framework was provided in Chapter One to assist with understanding how each of these paradigms work together.

### **Procedure**

This study consists of nine participant's narratives collected through a narrative interviewing process guided by the qualitative research paradigm of narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry promotes the emergence of a co-constructed story from an open-ended questioning interview process. The co-constructed aspect was made possible through the inclusion of my bracketing interview conducted prior to any of the other interviews. The bracketing interview laid bare my own assumptions and bias about the martial arts and my experience in the practice. This allowed me to interact with the participants in order to co-construct their narratives while being aware of the bias that I bring to the research. Once each interview was conducted I transcribed the raw data verbatim using a word processor. After each interview was conducted I began to use Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phase model of analysis. This procedure required a constant re-immersion in the data due to the constant comparison necessary for the beginning phases.

## Major Findings

Major findings that emerged from the study are the themes, categories, sub-categories, and variations that were distilled from the narratives of the participants' experiences of practicing the martial arts. A more detailed listing of these can be found in Chapter Four. The themes that emerged captured, for these participants, what it means to be an advanced martial artist. The themes define for the participants and myself what our practice of the martial arts means. These themes were also given definition through the analytic process of Braun and Clarke's (2006) model. These definitions are derived from the participants' experiences of practicing the martial arts and can be found in greater detail in Chapter Four.

### Major Findings Related to Literature

The major findings of this study support previous research reviewed in Chapter Two. The research reviewed focused on the martial arts, and further supports research conducted in the field of adult learning related to the areas of transformational learning theory, self-directed learning, and collaborative learning. The way the major findings from this study tie into established martial arts and adult learning literature are discussed below.

**Martial Arts Research Literature.** In this section the findings from the current study, as they relate to the martial arts research literature are discussed. Chapter Two reviewed the martial arts research literature, separating it into two distinct categories, quantitative and qualitative research. Examined here are the relationships of the current study's findings in conjunction with the research and distinct areas of focus as they were presented in Chapter Two.

**Motivation.** Findings from this study support research by Ko et al., (2010) and Ding et al., (2015), in particular the theme *Way of Life* speaks to this facet of support. Participants in this study spoke about *Passion, Discipline, Confidence, Self-Betterment, and Fun* as being *Values*

that the practice of the martial arts instills in them and potentially contributes to their continued practice. Research by Ding et al., (2015), is also supported through illustrations of different circumstances that brought the participants to the martial arts. Whether it was through stereotypes and media exposure, traumatic experiences, or familial relationships there were multiple reasons for beginning the practice of martial arts. However, regardless of the reasons for beginning there was a convergence of reasons to stay involved which were shown through the four themes that exist as part of the advanced martial artist experience: *Change*, *Embodiment*, *Interaction*, and *Way of Life*.

This study's findings also support Rogowska and Kuśnierz (2013) who stated that a focus on gender and age as a motivational factor for participating in the martial arts was less important than other mitigating factors. The age range of participants when they started their practice, in this study, points to some who were young and others who were already considered adults. Gender itself was not a mitigating factor in any of the participant's narratives for why they began the martial arts (with the exception of Christine's narrative which will be discussed later), rather a focus on stereotypes, media exposure, or an influential other who started the participants down their path of the martial arts was a more important variable in their participation and motivation than either age or gender.

**Youth Outcomes.** In the theme *Interaction* exists the category of *Other as Teacher*, which illustrates the importance of who is teaching, how they teach and model, and the values that they teach and embody. This finding supports Vertonghen and Theeboom's (2012) work, which examined the various contextual factors that influence outcomes of youths practicing martial arts. The current study's design, methodology, and theoretical framework all point to

maintaining the wholeness of the participant's narrative, paying attention to the unique characteristics of their stories and the contexts in which they are told and lived.

***Quantitative Health-Related Benefits.*** The results and findings of this study supports the health-related benefits of practicing the martial arts found in Draxler, Ostermann, and Honekamp (2011) and Twemlow, Sacco, and Fonagy (2008). Stress relief was the primary finding of this study that pointed to health-related benefits that could be measurable. However, it would be wrong to point to these as measurable results since the focus of the study was on the experience of practicing the martial arts from an advanced student's perspective, rather than a focus on the health-related benefits of their practice.

***Qualitative Health-Related Benefits.*** Findings from this study supports Rosenberg and Sapochnik's (2005) research into the practice of martial arts and its embeddedness in popular culture. The findings from this study point toward transformation occurring from the beginning of the practice to the point in which interviews were conducted for each participant. Many of the participants claimed an interest in the martial arts primarily due to stereotypes and media portrayals of martial arts. Yet, as they continued to practice and became more involved with the martial arts these initial interests transformed into values, experience with others, and finding something that they did not know they were looking for.

Findings from the current study also support Rosenberg and Sapochnik's (2005) focus on martial arts practice being a language that is communicated through embodied action. The theme *Interaction* contains a category of *Other Ways of Knowing* and a sub-category of *Dialogue*. The concept of *Dialogue* speaks to how the participants viewed interactions with the others (i.e., sensei, instructors, partners, students, and family) as an other-way-of-knowing which promoted deeper understanding of themselves and their partners. These interactions were

typically non-verbal being felt through bodily interactions rather than engaging in rational and verbal discourse.

Findings from the current study support Aindow's (2013) research as a martial therapist, and her belief that the social value of the martial arts goes beyond what can be expressed through dialogue and discourse. The focus on rivalry and conflict with an other was most evident in Ian's narrative which addressed his perspective of competition, the resulting experiences, and how they were beneficial for him and his growth as a martial artist. Ian also spoke about how his focus was not to be better than a rival but to be better than he was the day before. This potentially illustrates that the other in the therapeutic relationship or any relationship can be beneficial regardless of the physical manifestation or lack thereof.

Findings from the current study contradict Aindow's (2013) belief that martial arts works through psychotherapy by cultivating the concept of fear. Instead, the relationship developed was one of focusing on growth for the individual through a focus of the teacher and student relationship. This is strongly supported through the theme of *Interaction* and the category of *Other as Teacher* in this study. Rather than a relationship built around rivalry, this relationship proposed the teacher as a role model or someone who embodies the values that the participants want to see in themselves and are viewed as being worthwhile to practice and implement in living it day to day.

Aindow's (2013) analysis of two case studies illustrates that through martial therapy the dialogue became "organic and transformative" (Aindow, 2013, p. 238) contrasting with the participants previously lived experiences. Similarly, two stories from this study strongly reinforce the organic and transformative aspects of practicing martial arts, especially through the expression of drives that would be viewed as antisocial in nature. Ian's narrative about

competition and the release he experiences that allows him to be a little more like himself have already been expressed. Christine's narrative addressed the aspect of expression and drives that might be construed as antisocial through her work experiences, especially how others in her office look to her as a "*guard dog*" (Christine) and first line of defense if anyone were to attack her office.

However, the strongest finding of this study that supports the "organic and transformative" (p. 238) aspect of Aindow's (2013) research is the theme *Way of Life*. The martial arts were viewed by all participants as something more than fighting with many stating that you don't have to be a martial artist to know how to fight. In many cases it was the confidence in their abilities, some of which may be viewed as antisocial, that led to their understanding that they did not have to use their knowledge or their techniques. The confidence in these "antisocial" techniques allowed the participants to embody the values that they want to portray in their day to day life knowing that if they needed them the techniques were easily accessible. This allowed for their transformations to become organic, something that naturally happened as a result of their practice.

Finally, with regard to research about qualitative health benefits, the findings that Theeboom, De Knop, and Wylleman's (2008) research illustrates in regard to "self-control, discipline, and self-esteem" (Theeboom, De Knop, & Wylleman, 2008, p. 309) can all be found in the *Values* that the participants of this study saw as being integral for an advanced martial artist to embody. The relationships with teachers that Theeboom, De Knop, and Wylleman (2008) also stress as being important for their respondents is also an integral aspect of becoming and being an advanced martial artist for the participants of the current study. The theme *Interaction* and its category of *Other as Teacher* clearly demonstrates that the importance for an



advanced martial artist is not in what style is taught, rather the importance lies in who teaches and how it is taught, the relationship between teacher and student is the most important. This also supports research by Aindow (2013) and Vertonghen and Theeboom (2012), which focuses on the importance of who is teaching and how they teach.

**Teaching.** The experiences of participants in this study speak directly to the importance of the teacher and their guiding influence on the participants' decisions of becoming advanced martial artists. The interactions that were fostered through the teacher and student relationship mimicked family dynamics and fostered senses of belonging, joy, and confidence. As an advanced martial artist, it was brought up in multiple narratives that you know when the teacher is the right fit, the narratives did not use the three teaching approaches advocated by Vertonghen and Theeboom (2012) or the Teaching Approach in Martial Arts Framework (TAMA) used in Vertonghen, Theeboom, and Cloes's (2012) research. Instead, the participants in the current study relied on the example set for them by their primary or past teachers to distinguish if the practice of other martial arts were the right fit, relying on expectations and values that the teacher modeled that matched what the participant was expecting and looking for.

Helen's narrative explicitly supports Fontaine's (2002) findings that her experience as a martial artist and educator and claims that she has "opened her mind to an art and tradition that seemed very different" (Fontaine, 2002, p. 221) initially but found that her reflection on "each illuminates the other" (p. 221). Helen, in a similar fashion to Fontaine (2002), reflected on her journey of learning the martial art of tai chi (instead of karate) and how it supports her experiences as a martial artist and her life outside of martial arts. Helen wove her experiences into a narrative of how she overcame the perceived stigma of doing something that is different from what everyone else is doing into her professional life.

**Embodiment.** Within the current study, the relationship with the other was a primary concern of findings from the theme *Interaction*. This interaction with the other supports White and Miller-Lane's (2011) findings of ungendered interactions through experiences of practicing martial arts, which leads to cooperation and deeper understanding of the other (or partner) through practicing the martial arts. Of all the participants' experiences, Christine's narrative was primarily focused on the idea of these ungendered interactions in how she interacted with her peers in the dojo setting. However, gender as an issue did emerge in her narrative in relation to working with newer students. Newer male students saw Christine as a smaller female and were reluctant to respect her and her rank initially, she felt that it took her time and practice to understand how to interact appropriately with these students. However, newer female students were seen by Christine as either those looking for a boyfriend, which she felt the need to impart the importance of why they should be there practicing. Or those who she felt she had to pull back on through her intensity and abilities to not "break" them and turn them away from the martial arts. This illustrates an interesting dichotomy in her approach to working with the different genders, even though her story advocates for fair treatment of the individual through practicing the martial arts it does not mean that there is equal treatment in regard to gender in the relationship with the other in the martial arts. However, this may also be due to the differences that may occur in the types of martial arts since White and Miller-Lane (2011) were focused on aikido, which is not a competitive martial art and Christine's narrative came from Brazilian jujitsu which has a competitive element.

Two narratives from the current study strongly reinforce Channon's (2013) findings of the importance of mixed-sex integration for realistic perspectives of self-defense in the martial arts. Christine and Anna's narratives speak to the use of techniques which allow for their smaller

frames to overcome larger opponents. Christine's experiences approach the issue from the perspective of not being a victim and becoming comfortable working with a larger male opponent and the realism that accompanies this relationship. Anna's experiences were more hypothetical situations, but nonetheless focused on her training with male partners which added realism to the techniques and a confidence that if she were forced to defend herself she knew the techniques worked.

**Adult Learning Research Literature.** The adult learning literature that reviewed in Chapter Two revolved around transformative learning theory and critiques by Taylor (1997) that advocated for a need to better understand other ways of knowing. Specifically, embodiment and embodied learning were brought to the forefront of the literature review as illustrative of other ways of knowing and how this study was designed to address this critique of transformative learning theory. Self-directed learning represented by the PRO (Brockett & Hiemstra, 1991) and PPC (Hiemstra & Brockett, 2012) models was also discussed as was collaborative learning as presented by Peters and Armstrong (1999). These three areas of research within the field of adult learning were all supported through findings from the current study and will be discussed in the next section.

**Transformative Learning Theory.** The findings of this study illustrate the transformational capabilities that practicing the martial arts, a non-Western and other way of knowing, instilled in the participants. The impact of practicing the martial arts for the participants was transformational across the board, beginning with a disorienting dilemma in many cases and ending with a reintegration into the participant's life of new perspectives that were a result of practicing the martial arts and encountering the themes of *Change*, *Embodiment*, *Interaction*, and *Way of Life*. Transformation is illustrated in the participants' narratives through

the theme of *Change*, specifically the category of *Time and Experience*. This change through time required that the participants continue to practice the martial arts, thereby gaining more experience and a deeper understanding of the martial arts, themselves, and others. This change as a result of time and experience is a necessary precondition to becoming an advanced martial artist.

Another necessary precondition for Mezirow's (1978) initial conceptualization of Transformational Learning Theory is the disorienting dilemma as catalyst to transformation. However, findings from this study found that a disorienting dilemma was not a necessary catalyst for all participants, with some participants encountering disorienting dilemmas after beginning their martial art journey. Frank began his journey not out of a disorienting dilemma but rather a desire to follow in his father's footsteps. This was not something that was irreconcilable with his current state of being, rather it was something that he wanted. Similarly, Ian came to the martial arts out of a desire to imitate the characters he grew up idolizing through media portrayals and stereotypes. However, Greg came to the martial arts due to a disorienting dilemma and then left his practice for an extended period of time before returning to it once again due to another disorienting dilemma.

Disorienting dilemma or not, the experience of practicing the martial arts results in a fundamental perspective transformation. Evidence of transformation within the participant's narratives and findings from analysis point to something other than simply practicing the martial arts as being a transformative agent. There is an allusion to processes within the practice and experience gained through the martial arts that results in a transformation for the participant. The process of transformation was seen in all of the participants' narratives. Transformation for an advanced martial artist was a component of the process of their practice and occurred through

the sub-categories of *Time and Practice*, *Time and Other*, and *Time and Movement*.

Transformational process also occurred despite the different martial arts, the difference in genders, different teachers, and unique contexts of each participants. This process of transformation is illustrated through the interconnectedness of the four themes identified and defined as being a necessary precondition for being an advanced martial artist.

The participants' narratives and findings from my analysis were inconsistent with the original conceptualization of ordered steps, originally proposed by Mezirow (Mezirow & Associates, 2000). Three steps of the transformational process, described by Mezirow, that were not explicitly supported through the narratives of the participants are: (a) Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame; (b) A critical assessment of assumptions; (c) Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared. Through the analysis it was found that participants experienced self-examination not through fear, anger, guilt, or shame, but rather experienced it through a sense of belonging and confidence, joy, love, discipline, and passion. The self-examinations the participants experienced were always in relation to the other, and in the environment of the martial arts dojo the other was seen as a helpful figure, either teacher or partner, who guided the participant along their path through positive facets of interaction rather than perceived negative interactions.

A critical assessment of assumptions was not always conducted by every participant. Some participants never mentioned critically assessing their values, rather attempting to model the values that the teacher possessed and embodied, or the values that they believed should dictate their actions as a result of exposure to the particular martial art system that they were a part of. Finally, findings from participants' narratives did not support recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared. When speaking about their philosophy

of the martial arts, Ian and Helen specifically mentioned that their philosophy, practice, and experience were their own and that it could not be directly transposed, nor should it, onto another. Rather they believed that the individual must come to the martial arts, the values it instills, and the transformation that is possible in their own way, time, and manner. In order to become an advanced martial artist, the individual must make the choice and there is little recognition that the transformation for themselves should be felt by everyone. Also, the differing and unique contexts of entries into the martial arts illustrates that there is a lack of recognition for shared discontent that may lead to transformation.

Taylor's (1997) critique of transformational learning theory, for a need to establish a deeper understanding of other-ways-of-knowing was addressed through the current study. The theme *Embodied Learning/Embodiment* illustrates how this study directly addresses a deeper understanding of what it means to learn through an-other-way-of-knowing, specifically through a non-Western perspective of learning. The current study addressed this other way of making meaning of our experience through the body, mind, and spirit connection. A major finding of the study that supports this method of understanding is the order in which it occurs. The body is always the first point of learning in embodiment with the mind and spirit completing the holistic learning of the individual. This order is paramount to the experiences that the participants shared with me. Even though it may seem as if there is an extensive gap between the order of body, mind, and spirit the understanding that occurs through this process of embodiment can be accomplished in rapid succession, and all three components must be present and balanced within the advanced martial artist.

Chapter Four reinforced the interconnectedness between the themes, categories, and sub-categories that came out of the participant's narratives. For embodiment, a prominent

interconnection occurs within the category of *East vs. West* in the theme *Interaction*.

Embodiment in the context of the martial arts is not necessarily a solitary enterprise. The model of DNA created illustrates that the themes interact in an almost infinite number of variations, are interconnected, and together comprise the totality of the advanced martial artist. The practice of the martial arts typically involves interaction with all of the themes presented in this study to create a holistic learning experience for the individual.

***Self-Directed Learning.*** Major findings from this study support the PRO model of self-directed learning as conceptualized by Brockett and Hiemstra (1991) as well as their updated PPC model (Hiemstra & Brockett, 2012). The findings that offer support for both models come from values shared by the themes: *Embodiment*, *Interaction*, and *Way of Life*. Primarily, *Responsibility* as a sub-category and variation within these values comes from narratives that promote participant responsibility for their own learning and a sense of responsibility for their teaching. Greg and Frank's narratives both speak of coming back to the martial arts after extended time away, taking responsibility to initiate their learning all over again. Boomer's narrative illustrates how an advanced martial artist not only takes responsibility for their learning, but at other times must take responsibility for their teaching of others, rather than simply being told to teach.

Being an advanced martial artist means to ask questions and seek out the answers and every participant's narrative points to a cycle of the advanced martial artist planning, carrying out, and evaluating their learning. They plan their learning by choosing the type of martial art to practice, usually in response to the compatibility between what they are looking for and the values that the teacher embodies. The narratives point to the participants carrying out their learning through the amount of time they dedicate to their practice. Finally, the evaluation of

their learning is illustrated through their stories of perseverance and staying with the martial arts despite the rigorous demand for discipline, unyielding commitment, and unbridled passion that is required to continue practicing the martial arts. The findings from the participants' evaluations are all positive in nature and demonstrate that self-directed learning is both a characteristic and process that the advanced martial artist embodies.

Findings from the current study support the PPC model (Hiemstra & Brockett, 2012) in regard to balance as a necessary precondition in order for individuals to move from a beginning martial artist to an advanced martial artist (who is a self-directed learner as defined through the PRO model). This balance within the PPC model overlays with the understanding that to be an advanced martial artist means that you are a self-directed learner. Greg's narrative summed up the balance necessary for this move between body, mind, and spirit stating that until you are balanced in all three you are still a novice and that you cannot advance in only one or two and consider yourself an advanced martial artist.

***Collaborative Learning.*** The findings of this study support work conducted previously by Overton (2016a; 2016b; 2016c) who conducted preliminary analysis of the martial arts in relation to the typology of teaching and learning (Peters & Armstrong, 1998). In this work, it is argued that the martial arts are a potential avenue for exploring other-ways-of-knowing, specifically in relation to the three types of teaching and learning stated within Peters and Armstrong's (1998) typology. Examples are given from a personal perspective of how the typology of teaching and learning are represented within the practice of the martial arts. Peters and Armstrong's (1998) typology states that it is through dialogue that the teaching and learning experience creates meaningful experiences for the teacher and learner. Overton's (2016a; 2016b; 2016c) work pushes the boundary of dialogue by proposing that within the martial arts there is a



dialogue that is unspoken, felt rather than talked about through the different possible interactions and configurations of learner and teacher.

Findings from the current study support this conceptualization of dialogue through the body; dialogue that is felt, understood, and is no less meaningful than that which is spoken. The sub-category of *Dialogue* is concerned with the participants' experience of the martial arts as being something that is felt. Phrases drawn from their narratives include allusions to knowing when something is right, the feeling you get when you walk into a dojo or watch someone teaching, and direct statements about how the interaction with the other through the practice of the martial arts (something that is somatic in nature) is a dialogue or different way of knowing and understanding.

### **Imposter Syndrome**

One finding from the analysis of the data that I believe needs further exploration was the sense of imposter syndrome that some of the participants spoke about in regard to the experience of teaching. Clance and Imes (1978) defined imposter phenomenon as “an internal experience of intellectual phoniness” (Clance & Imes, 1978, p. 241). Pedler (2011) writes about imposter syndrome in relation to leadership qualities and initiatives. Citing Clance and Imes (1978) Pedler reiterates the distinction that it is not solely a phenomenon that affects women but anyone in a leadership position. Pedler (2011) finds that in leadership positions it is “felt that there is a mismatch between what they perceived as desirable leadership qualities...with the predominance of hierarchical and ‘heroic’ styles in senior positions” (Pedler, 2011, p. 90).

The participants of the current study who spoke to this feeling of imposter syndrome, of not belonging and being a fraud, did so in relation to the aspects and responsibilities of teaching or being thrust into a leadership role. Both male and female participants spoke of feeling this

way even though they internally knew that they had the ability and skills necessary to teach. Brems, Baldwin, Davis, and Namyniuk (1994) found that at a collegiate level imposter syndrome was also prevalent in in faculty. From their findings it can be said that confidence in one's abilities is a primary deterrent to imposter syndrome. The practice of the martial arts does instill confidence, as the participants of this study have illustrated. However, the imposter syndrome still affected them internally when they taught. One potential mitigating factor of the imposter syndrome in the participants of this study is practice. This factor involves time and experience with teaching which comes in the form of the practice of teaching and learning. The more one is able to practice teaching the more one becomes familiar and accustomed to the responsibilities.

I believe that another possible mitigating factor for the participants of this study is the role of the other as teacher. In martial arts research the influence the teacher has on students has been explored, with the results being that the teacher-student relationship is more important to the perceived value of the martial arts to the practitioner than is the style of martial art practiced. I believe that through the participants experiences as instructors, as well as my own, having a sensei (teacher) who provides support and models the values that you want to see in yourself can be a potential avenue to limit the imposter syndrome. This relationship between teacher and emerging teacher in advanced martial artists needs further exploration.

### **Outliers and Surprises**

There is one outlier with regard to gender that emerged from the findings of this study and three surprises that will be discussed later on. These outliers and surprises highlight the point that no study can capture everything about a phenomenon and that it takes many studies to accurately portray the phenomena of study.

## Outlier

There was one outlier of themes, categories, and sub-categories that emerged through the analysis of the data and three surprises that resulted from the delimitations and sampling method of the current study. The theme *Interaction* houses the outlier from the analysis of the participants' narratives. Within this theme is the category of *Other and Self*, and within this is the sub-category of *Excludes Gender* where we find the outlier of the analysis. Gender in the participants stories was a non-issue, with the exception of Christine's narrative. Gender classified as a non-issue means that it was not the primary factor in how they answered the two research questions. This does not mean that the participant's gender had no effect on their experience of practicing the martial arts. It just illustrates that for these participants, at this point in time, their gender was not a mitigating factor of their experience. However, in Christine's experience, there was a definitive issue which she experienced as a result of her gender and perceptions surrounding the stereotypical interactions from a male oriented activity. She experienced a gender biased interaction in this gym and in this particular instance, but overcame the bias by displaying an aggression that the instructor and male amateur fighter were not expecting.

This finding supports previous work on gendered interactions in martial arts dojos by White and Miller-Lane (2011), and Channon (2013), which addressed the lack of perception of gender in aikido, which White and Miller-Lane experienced and the focus on realistic applications of techniques using partners who were male and larger in regard to the female martial artists. There is a respect that is engendered through time, effort, dedication, and practice within the martial arts. This was restated time and again throughout my participant's narratives

as a camaraderie that is shared through time and effort, which was echoed throughout the current study as concepts of family and brotherhood.

However, Christine's narrative included an interesting perspective that the martial arts may not be for everyone, a sentiment echoed by others but spelled out in relation to a male dominated sport. Christine's love for Brazilian jujitsu and desire to push her limits as a practitioner enables her to accept that there is a culture that accompanies this form of practice and to be a practitioner means to accept the cultural norms embedded in the practice of this particular martial art. Another reason that Christine's experience was an outlier is that it seems here that the martial art fit Christine, but more so than other participants she has to work to make herself fit the martial art due to her gender.

### **Surprises**

Three surprises occurred to me as a result of this study. These surprises were issues of diversity, my definition of an advanced martial artist, and limitations of the sampling method. Diversity was a delimitation that I had anticipated and discussed in Chapter One. I was pleasantly surprised when I was able to conduct three interviews with female martial artists. I had resigned myself to only being able to interview male martial artists due to the male oriented nature of how the martial arts are perceived in the West.

However, I believed in my heart that I would have a modicum of diversity in relation to race and ethnicity. But as the study continued and more participants contacted me for interviews the illusion was erased and I was left wondering if I would be the only participant of color (i.e. bracketing interview) and what this meant for the study. My narrative was the only one that hinted to an issue of race in the experience of being a martial artist. Others hinted at stereotypes associated with practicing the martial arts, but race and ethnicity never factored into their stories.

As I thought more about this issue of diversity I grew to understand that this is part of the research process and a finding that should be brought to light and discussed. Another thought that occurred to me in my research journal was that racial diversity and obtaining the experiences of martial artists of color would be a potential next step for future research. Just because my story was the only one concerned with race and ethnicity did not mean that it was not an important factor or aspect of the experience of being an advanced martial artist, it just meant that there is more work to do.

The second surprise that caught my attention was my definition of advanced martial artist. Through the participant's experiences it became evident that, although the participants did not view themselves as beginners or teachers, there were still aspects they brought up which addressed a continuous learning dynamic. This dynamic consistently made some of the participant's feel like a beginner. There were multiple narratives which illustrated that my spectrum of martial artists (i.e., beginner, advanced, and teacher) may need to address an additional label of intermediate situated between beginner and advanced. This was repetitively defined, through the participants' narratives, as someone who was no longer a beginner but did not quite feel that they were advanced.

The third and final surprise was the limitation experienced of my sampling method. I had chosen to select participants for this study using a criterion specific, purposeful sampling method with a network or snowball sampling method for support (LeCompte, Preissle, & Tesch, 2003; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). The criteria selected to use for this method worked, however the use of a network or snowball sampling method fell drastically short of providing participants. I had expected a more successful use of the sampling method and did not expect that almost half of the interviews would come from participants that I already knew. However, I do not think this

hampered or diminishes the results of my study at all. Because narrative inquiry was the method employed to collect the data and analyze them, my contributions to the narratives were considered integral to the co-construction of the participants' narratives. The fact that three of the interviewees were acquaintances of mine was not an issue for this study. They still met the criteria for participation in the study, and it was previously described that the initial participants would be drawn from those who were familiar to myself. However, it may be argued that the closeness of the relationship could have brought in bias from my perspective or theirs, which might have affected the narrative that was told to me as a researcher instead of the narrative told to me as their friend. To address this bias, I turn to the legitimacy of individual perspectives within qualitative research, and the ontological and epistemological perspectives that I worked from. This allows for the existence and validity of multiple subjective realities within the participants' narratives. The reality they chose to re-tell and that we chose to co-construct was one of many choices and was dictated by a myriad of factors. But the themes that emerged from their narratives also corresponded and spoke to the themes that emerged from the other participants' narratives, the ones that I was not acquainted with.

### **Implications for Practice**

This discussion contains four implications for practice: (a) Theoretical Framework, (b) Definitions of martial arts concepts, (c) Elements for practitioners of somatic and embodied practices, (d) Martial arts teachers and students, and (e) Comparison to Western sports.

### **Embodied Narrative Knowing Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework used to guide this study was created utilizing three established paradigms (Social Constructivism, Embodiment, and Narrative Knowing) as support since there was no theoretical framework that could accurately portray how other-ways-of-knowing,

especially non-Western perspectives, were experienced by adult learners. For a more in-depth explanation of the theoretical framework please refer to Chapter One. All three components of the theoretical framework were selected because of the importance that each places on the role of experience. Since the study is concerned with adult learners and experience is central to how adults make meaning of their learning, the three paradigms were deemed appropriate for combination to form the theoretical framework.

The theoretical framework allowed the current study to focus on the stories that the participants live and use to make meaning of their experiences of being an advanced martial artist. This led to a more generalized and broader interpretation of what it means to be an advanced martial artist. Since this study was designed to address a gap in martial arts research by examining the experiences of advanced martial artists a broad stroke was necessary to establish a foothold to launch further studies from, rather than a microscopic focus on the experiences of advanced martial artists that had been accomplished through previous research. The constructed theoretical framework also allowed for the inclusion of the whole person, place, context, and time, all elements of Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) "three-dimensional space", but still framed in a narrative order or plot which Polkinghorne (1995) advocates. The framework allowed for the data to speak across each participant's stories resulting in the themes that emerged as a result of the analysis, rather than a treatment of each narrative as an individual case study.

Finally, the embodied narrative knowing theoretical framework allowed for a focus through the analysis of the socially constructed nature of the participants' experiences. This focus showed the connection between each participant's narrative in relation to the socially constructed contexts in which they were situated, told, and retold. The theoretical framework

granted me permission to represent a holistic picture of each participant, rather than a cutout of them as individuals that only represented aspects of their experiences that fit within a prescribed framework. Embodied narrative knowing withstood the initial testing of this research study and illustrates a model to be used in future studies that are aimed at exploring other ways of knowing and representing the data in a manner digestible by Western audiences.

### **Definitions of Martial Arts Concepts**

Another implication for practice comes from the definitions that were created through the analysis and my understandings of the participants' narratives. These definitions lay the foundation for what it means to be an advanced martial artist. Practitioners may find these definitions useful to gauge their own journeys against, a litmus test of sorts. Using the defined themes as milestones to strive toward or goals to set for themselves, as they continue to grow and learn as martial artists.

The themes, categories, and sub-categories that have been defined are the first attempt in research, of which I am aware, to clearly distinguish what these concepts mean within the context of the martial arts. This will be discussed later in the section dealing with future research, but warrants mentioning here due to the implications that practitioners of the martial arts may draw from the definitions. With many dojos, studios, gyms, and other practices being marketed as businesses that can help children develop certain desirable characteristics, it may be beneficial to explicitly spell out what the values are that they are attempting to teach. For example, discipline in one context (e.g., football, baseball, or other Westernized sport) may not be the same in others, and a definition based in martial arts research lends greater validity to the values being taught within the martial arts. Also, these definitions may help those (i.e., beginners, intermediate, advanced, or teachers) who have unrealistic expectations of what the



martial arts can do for them temper those with an expected reality and definitive results that they might be able to achieve.

### **Elements for Practitioners of Somatic and Embodied Practices**

The findings of the current study could prove useful to other teachers and practitioners of somatic and embodied practices that are not martial arts. Of particular interest might be the theoretical framework which gives those who are interested in exploring the experiences of their students or of themselves a firm footing to launch such inquiries to further their understanding of their particular practice or context. I envision this being useful for anyone who teaches at a collegiate, professional, or business level, and the findings from the use of the theoretical framework may produce actionable results based on experiences of the parties directly involved or concerned.

The findings from the current study surrounding embodiment are particularly useful for those educators who operate within a Western paradigm. There exists a clear order to embodiment, in which the body is first learned through, followed closely by the mind and spirit. There is an indication from the findings of the current study that other somatic and embodied practices may benefit from a re-shaping of their mindsets and how they approach educational endeavors. If the focus in such practices is on training or educating through the body first then the other components that they work through, not necessarily mind and spirit, may naturally fall into place.

### **Martial Arts Teachers and Students**

Martial art teachers can benefit from the study's findings in two primary ways. First, is a reflection on practice, which is similar to Fontaine's (2002) study. The findings from this study could prompt martial arts teachers to think about their particular journey and keep in mind the

different places that their students may be at. This mindfulness for their students' contexts could spark a renewed interest in teaching, if they have fallen into the same old rut. It may lead to new and innovative teaching approaches dredged up from long forgotten drills that they initially learned through.

The second way that martial arts teachers may benefit from the findings of the current study are the definitions of themes, categories, and sub-categories that emerged from the participants' narratives. These concepts provide a concrete example of what their students can expect to gain from practicing with them, assuming they see similarities from the findings in their own story and agree with the definitions that have emerged from the current study. This concrete example of results appeals to a Western driven desire for evidenced based results. It has been stated in this study and others (i.e., Rosenberg & Sapochnik, 2005) that trying to get non-martial artists involved in the martial arts is a difficult process, primarily due to the stereotypes and media exposure that most Western audiences are exposed to. The concrete examples from this study may help to promote the martial arts as a way of life, something that is more than just fighting. This may draw in individuals who before were reluctant to participate in the martial arts. Anna's narrative is a prime example of this idea. She initially was reluctant to practice martial arts because she did not want to punch or get punched. But after finding out that there were different types of martial arts that did not involve striking she found one that began her journey.

Beginning martial arts students benefit from the findings of the current study through a glimpse into their potential future. Beginning students can see what experiences advanced students have gone through, and prepare themselves for what might lie ahead. Even though everyone's journey is unique to their circumstances the findings of the current study show that

there are similarities that exist between the seemingly disparate narratives of different martial artists practicing different martial arts. Advanced martial artists also benefit from the findings of the current study through a comparison of their journey to those of the participants. As mentioned before, advanced students can use the themes, categories, sub-categories, and narratives as milestones to track their progress on their journey.

### **Comparison to Western Sports**

When compared to other sport activities the martial arts can become as goal and win-at-all-costs oriented as the rest (Channon, 2012). However, through the literature review on martial arts research and the narratives of the participants, the sporting aspect is only a singular component, often times a tertiary one to the primary motivation for practicing the martial arts. I believe that the theme *Way of Life* distinguishes the practice of the martial arts from other forms of sport. The primary component that I believe makes this distinction is the extension beyond the martial art to everyday life. The martial arts are not something that you abandon as soon as you leave the dojo, there is no field of play to leave it all out on. Just because you finish practice does not mean that you finish being a martial artist, it follows you and becomes a part of you. Participants in other sports may be able to separate themselves from their sport, through the participant's narratives they have shown an inability to separate themselves from their martial art experience.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This study has set forth a path for future research trajectories that reach beyond the scope of the initial significance proposed in Chapter One. The recommendations for future research are discussed in relation to research that focuses on: (a) theoretical framework, (b) model of

themes, (c) definitions of themes, (d) baseline for martial arts research, and (e) diversity and groups.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The embodied narrative knowing theoretical framework created for this study has been effective for exploring other ways of knowing. The effectiveness extends to other studies that are concerned with non-Western ways of knowing. This framework could prove invaluable for helping audiences that do not have any experience with the phenomena under study come to a better understanding through the use of this framework. Other areas of research that could benefit from this framework are the field of nursing and counseling. These practitioners have expressed support and encouragement for future uses of this framework. Conversations I have had about how this study's theoretical framework can be of use to them have centered on their experience of disconnection between policy makers and those on the front lines having to implement policies.

The theoretical framework established through the current study also opens the door for researchers who have searched for ways to express feelings and other ways of knowing they know exist, but have been unfulfilled with the frameworks available to them. This is not to say that there have not been other theoretical frameworks that could accomplish this task, but they may have not been deployed to accurately express the researcher's experiences and findings through proper academic fashions. However, a strength of the current theoretical framework is the holistic nature in which the experiences are kept intact, rather than being piecemealed into individual characteristics that are removed from the context that they are situated within. This theoretical framework also fits the findings rather than the findings being forced to fit a theory that does not properly support them.

## Model of Themes

Phase six reflected on the process of using Braun and Clarke's (2006) model of analysis and spoke about the changes that occurred during the analysis process. The re-presentation of the analysis transformed from a grand narrative about what it meant to be an advanced martial artist to the presentation of a model, based on the double helix of DNA, which better represented and honored the analysis process as well as the participants' stories. This model is represented in Chapter Four's Figure 3. Future research conducted should test the connections of the themes as they are presented for validation of the almost infinite ways in which the themes can interact with each other. Based on the model, future research may also consider the themes and if there is a specific order to how the themes interact, not only with each other but also the order of sequence in which the emerge in a participant's story.

## Definitions of Themes

Through the co-construction of the narratives with the participants four themes emerged: (a) *Change*; (b) *Embodied Learning/Embodiment*; (c) *Interaction*; and (d) *Way of Life*, and were identified as indicative of their lived experiences, what led them to the martial arts, and what it is like to practice the martial arts. These themes were also defined through the process of the conducted analysis and compose what it means to be an advanced martial artist. The four primary themes and definitions put a non-Western other way of knowing into an understandable artifact, that regardless of whether one possesses the experience or not is relatable across experiential barriers of understanding. Future research should direct attention to the validation and verification of these themes as being indicative of becoming an advanced martial artist, as well as the definitions themselves. Further research is needed to determine if the definitions and themes are generalizable across a broader section of martial artist than were focused on in this study.

### **Baseline for Martial Arts Research**

Through the design of this study, a broad stroke was utilized to explore the participants' narratives. This created a general experience of being an advanced martial artist, rather than a distillation of the essence of experience, which a phenomenological approach might have taken. This study has created a baseline for the experiences of adult learners who practice the martial arts. This baseline has been established within the contexts that they emerged from and are not viewed through any particular lens. From this point, future research should explore more specific aspects of the martial arts. These specific approaches could take the form of examining different styles of martial arts or a focus on different demographic variables. Since a baseline has been established the focus of martial arts research could be on the specifics that are of interest to the researcher and designs, rather than feeling they must re-establish the martial arts as a viable focus for research.

This study also added to a research method that could aid future researchers, through establishing a common language for studying the martial arts. Centered around the participants' narratives and experiences the themes of this study have all been defined through their own words. Further studies that attempt to verify these definitions may provide the evidence of a common language about the martial arts, which martial artists use and agree upon. By probing the language that martial artists use to teach and learn, within a Western context, a common language about the martial arts may emerge through future studies.

The themes and definitions from this study's findings also contribute to the potential development of an instrument to measure certain aspects of martial arts, milestones that one must pass through to become an advanced martial artist. This instrument could work in conjunction with the TAMA instrument (Vertonghen, Theeboom, & Cloes, 2012) used to measure the type of

teacher that a martial artist is, and potentially look at aspects of martial arts teachers that may instill or inhibit certain aspects of a martial artist's development.

### **Diversity and Groups**

The racial and ethnic diversity of the participants represented within the current study approached a homogeneous makeup similar, to much of the martial arts research that was reviewed for this study. Also, much of the research literature on martial arts focuses on the study of an Eastern practice within a Western context. For example, Ongiri (2002) examined the perceived infatuation by African Americans with kung fu theatre and other stereotypical articles from Asian culture. Ongiri (2002) identified potential pitfalls for one-way interest in cultural exchanges, but also pointed to the shared resonance with narratives and focus on bodily control by martial artists in movies who typically were overcoming and triumphing over colonial and authoritarian powers. Ongiri (2002) states that "African American attraction to Asian culture via martial arts films provides a telling moment of slippage and indeterminacy in which notions of the totalitarian nature of power and western notions of aesthetics, culture, and dominance are undone" (Ongiri, 2002, p. 39). This slippage points to moments when power relations can be examined in a different light, maybe not through being turned on its head but through shared cultural resistance. This resonance with another culture's narratives was also prevalent within the narratives of this study's participants. Many of the participants reported the initial draw to the martial arts stemming from exposure to stereotypes that they saw in popular media. Like the comparisons that Ongiri (2002) makes, the images and ideals that the participants in this study were attracted to resonated on some level with them, enough to instill a motivation to seek out more information and to continue to practice. More research is necessary, focusing on diverse populations who practice the martial arts. However, I believe that Ongiri (2002) is correct in

pointing out that a narrative of resistance to power will speak to anyone who has felt disenfranchised by power.

### **Western Context**

Channon and Jennings (2014), Fuller (1988), and Theeboom and Knop (1999) have explored empirical research conducted on and about the martial arts. Many of the studies reviewed by these authors, conducted on the martial arts or that use the martial arts are typically framed within Western paradigms. Channon and Jennings (2014) review was concerned with martial arts and combat sports (MACS) in relation to embodiment which they defined as “research centered on the living, moving and feeling social experiences of human beings” (Channon & Jennings, 2014, p. 773). Their study was situated within Western society and the martial arts being taught from this Western perspective. Fuller’s (1988) reviewed research that connected the martial arts with aspects of psychological health. And Theeboom and Knop (1999) examined research that focused on what physical education instruction could learn from an Asian martial art approach to teaching. Channon and Jennings (2014) found that what many of the studies have in common is the potential appropriation and altered knowledge that accompanies an Eastern martial art as it is disembedded from its original cultural roots. This alteration can lead to a “transformation of the ‘original’ cultural meanings of today’s ‘globalised’ MACS” (Channon & Jennings, 2014, p. 775). Gim (1998) identified this trend calling it a transformation of Eastern martial arts into leisure forms like many Western recreational practices.

A potential reason for this transformation is the tendency within Western academic settings to rely strongly on myths, stories, and stereotypes of Eastern practices (Henning, 1999). One avenue of addressing this appropriation through Western research practices that has been



explored is through cross-cultural comparative research. Research reviewed in Chapter Two illustrates this cross-cultural comparison. Specifically, Noy (2015) who examined his practice of teaching aikido with that of teaching qualitative research and Fontaine (2002) who was focused on the comparisons of having a beginner's mind in karate to that of teaching in a collegiate setting. A second avenue which potentially addresses this issue of appropriation is through ethnicity and race (Ongiri, 2002), gender (Channon, 2012, 2013; White & Miller-Lane, 2011), and cultural identities (Delamont, 2013; Siapno, 2012).

This study was situated within a Western perspective through: being conducted within the United States of America, utilizing Western paradigms to establish a theoretical framework, and the potential transformation of Eastern martial arts that were taught to the participants of this study. Based on the narratives and experiences shared in this study, however, it appears that a sense of appropriation of Eastern practices, which potentially renders the practiced martial art as inherently Western-sport minded leisure activities (Gim, 1998), was not a theme of the participants' narratives. The four themes that emerged and were defined in Chapter Four point toward a philosophical and fundamental difference within the participants when compared to many of the sport oriented practices, attitudes, and consumeristic behaviors of the West. This study was not specifically focused on a cross-cultural comparative analysis, nor was the focus to address race and ethnicity, gender, or identity. The purpose of this narrative study was to explore adult learners' lived experiences of learning and practicing martial arts in the southeastern United States of America. A Western focus may be implied from this purpose statement, but the findings indicate that an Eastern perspective was gained by the participants from practicing the martial arts.

### **Final Thoughts**

A question I posed at the beginning of this study was: as adults, how do we learn? Through this study I believe the answer is: we learn through embodiment. We learn as we experience new things, create new knowledge, and interact with others. This learning is not only through the meaning we make with our rational minds but includes the experiences felt through the body, mind, and spirit. The martial arts have illustrated non-Western, and other-ways-of-knowing which can be utilized for future research trajectories as well as ways of life for practitioners and non-practitioners as well. This study has attempted to define aspects of what it means to be an advanced martial artist. However, these definitions are not static, not set in stone. The martial arts are a unique journey for all who practice, and no two martial artists will have identical experiences. Nor will every martial artist interpret the experiences they gain in the same manner.

I am reminded of a comment my wife made to me a few years ago. She said that I took to the martial arts like some people take to religion. It is a lifelong pursuit, my way of life. This study has been a labor of love, vindication, and confirmation of my way of life. It was my hope to convey through this research the importance of my practice of the martial arts, which I believe was accomplished, and to address stereotypes and assumptions that others may have of the martial arts. But through the process I realized that my experiences, although unique to me, were shared by other martial artists. This has given me a renewed sense of hope that this research is meaningful not only to myself but to the larger martial arts community.

It has also reminded me that there is art in everything, including the research process. Kleinman (2000) based his educational approach on a set of principles that I believe work as a way of life for research and in general.

“Life is a state of continuous creation and moving is a universal manifestation of this creativity. Thus, every act, every gesture, every thought contains all the elements we look for, and recognize in a ‘work of art.’ Every behavior, gesture and thought, therefore, may be viewed as being ‘artful.’ These are, literally, creative acts. Therefore, we function as artists at every moment. Life and art become synonymous. Living becomes an artistic enterprise. It becomes incumbent upon education particularly, somatic education, to provide opportunities to create good art, to help us live our lives as good artists, both as theorists and practitioners.” (Somatics: Movement for the New Age, 1992, as cited in Kleinman, 2000, p. 98)

This study has opened the door for other martial arts research, which might focus on different guiding questions, methodologies, and methods. A phenomenological study is needed to understand the essence of what it means to be a martial artist; beginner, advanced, and teacher. A case study approach could be used to examine individual styles of martial arts instead of the multiple styles included in this study. Furthermore, not just martial arts have been posed as a viable way to research other ways of knowing but any somatic or embodied practice can now use the embodied narrative knowing theoretical framework and this study’s methodology to approach that practice.

I urge readers who have made it this far to remember that we are whole beings who move through life and create art in everything we do. Life is art and I urge everyone to embrace their inner artist, not just martial artist, but however one chooses to interpret it, to create more art in the world.

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## **APPENDICIES**

## APPENDIX A

### Participant Recruitment Email to Sensei and Dojo Owners

FROM: Michael Duncan Overton, [moverto2@vols.utk.edu](mailto:moverto2@vols.utk.edu)  
 TO:  
 RE: Participant Recruitment Email for Martial Arts Research

Greetings!

My name is Michael Duncan Overton. I am a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Tennessee, completing my dissertation. I am writing to inquire if you would be interested in helping with my study. I am interested in exploring the stories of martial artists, specifically:

- Adult Perspectives
- Advanced Martial Artists Perspectives (i.e., not beginners and not teachers)

If you know of individuals that fit the two criteria listed above, and you believe they would be willing to consider participating in my study please provide them with the attached flyer and contact me with the information provided at the end of this e-mail.

If selected for the study the participant(s) and I would schedule a time and location to meet that fits their needs. I will conduct an interview which will ask the participant to tell me or show me their story of learning and practicing the martial arts. The interviews will last approximately one hour or until the participant has nothing more they would like to share. The information will be collected using an audio recording device which will be stored in a locked office safe when not in use by the primary researcher. I will be the only one with access to the recordings and I will transcribe them verbatim. These transcriptions will then be analyzed and the findings will be reported in my dissertation.

The participant's identities will be kept confidential by assigning pseudonyms or aliases to each participant to ensure confidentiality. Also, any identifying information of specific people and specific places will be modified to ensure the confidentiality of the participant and those in their story. A consent form will be provided to each participant before the interview and must be completed in order for them to be considered for participation in the study. This consent form will also remind the participant that they may withdraw from the study at any point in time and their information will not be used. This withdrawal will have no negative impact on the participant.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Michael Duncan Overton  
 University of Tennessee  
 A 501 Bailey Education Complex  
 Knoxville TN 37996-3442  
[moverto2@vols.utk.edu](mailto:moverto2@vols.utk.edu)

## APPENDIX B

### Recruitment Flyer

**Do you consider yourself to be an advanced martial artist?**



**Would you like to tell your story of learning and practicing the martial arts?**



**Are you at least 18 years old or older?**

If you answered yes to all three of these questions then I would like to invite you to participate in my research study.

Please contact me at the information provided below.

Michael Duncan Overton University of Tennessee A 501 Bailey Education Complex Knoxville, TN 37996-3442 <a href="mailto:Moverto2@vols.utk.edu">Moverto2@vols.utk.edu</a>	Michael Duncan Overton University of Tennessee A 501 Bailey Education Complex Knoxville, TN 37996-3442 <a href="mailto:Moverto2@vols.utk.edu">Moverto2@vols.utk.edu</a>	Michael Duncan Overton University of Tennessee A 501 Bailey Education Complex Knoxville, TN 37996-3442 <a href="mailto:Moverto2@vols.utk.edu">Moverto2@vols.utk.edu</a>	Michael Duncan Overton University of Tennessee A 501 Bailey Education Complex Knoxville, TN 37996-3442 <a href="mailto:Moverto2@vols.utk.edu">Moverto2@vols.utk.edu</a>	Michael Duncan Overton University of Tennessee A 501 Bailey Education Complex Knoxville, TN 37996-3442 <a href="mailto:Moverto2@vols.utk.edu">Moverto2@vols.utk.edu</a>
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## APPENDIX C

### Participant Recruitment Email

FROM: Michael Duncan Overton, [moverto2@vols.utk.edu](mailto:moverto2@vols.utk.edu)

TO:

RE: Participant Recruitment Email for Martial Arts Research Consent Cover Statement

### Consent Cover Statement

Embodied practice: A narrative exploration of adult learners' lived experiences of learning martial arts in the southeastern United States of America

#### **Introduction**

My name is Michael Duncan Overton. I am a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Tennessee, completing my dissertation. I am writing to invite you to participate in a **research** study. The purpose of the study is to explore adult learners' lived experiences of learning and practicing martial arts.

#### **Information About Participants' Involvement in the Study**

The study will consist of the primary researcher (Michael Duncan Overton) conducting an interview with you, which will ask you to tell me or show me your story of learning and practicing the martial arts. The interview will last approximately one hour or until you feel that you have nothing more to say. The information will be collected using an audio recording device which will be stored in a locked office safe when not in use by the primary researcher (Michael Duncan Overton). The primary researcher (Michael Duncan Overton) will be the only one with access to the recordings and I will transcribe them verbatim. Once the interviews are transcribed I will send you a copy to review, if you wish, and you will be able to make any comments to the transcriptions. These transcriptions will then be analyzed and the findings and direct quotes will be reported for use in my dissertation.

#### **Risks**

There are no foreseeable risks other than those encountered in everyday life.

#### **Benefits**

The anticipated benefits achieved from this research will be the expansion of martial arts research to include the stories and experiences of advanced martial artists. There is also an anticipated benefit of enriching the field of adult learning by illustrating an other way of knowing that is more holistic and incorporates the mind and body into the meaning making process.

#### **Confidentiality**

All information in the study records will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely in a locked office and will be made available only to persons conducting the study unless participants specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link participants to the study. Your identity will be kept confidential by assigning a pseudonym or alias, of your choosing, to ensure confidentiality. Also, any

identifying information of specific people and specific places will be modified to ensure your anonymity and that of those in your story.

**Contact Information**

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study,) you may contact the researcher, Michael Duncan Overton, at [moverto2@vols.utk.edu](mailto:moverto2@vols.utk.edu), or his advisor, Dr. Ralph Brockett at [brockett@utk.edu](mailto:brockett@utk.edu). If you have questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact the University of Tennessee IRB Compliance Officer at [utkirb@utk.edu](mailto:utkirb@utk.edu) or (865) 974-7697.

**Participation**

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be destroyed and not used for this study.



## APPENDIX D

### Informed Consent Statement

#### Informed Consent Statement

Embodied practice: A narrative exploration of adult learners' lived experiences of learning martial arts in the southeastern United States of America

#### **Introduction**

My name is Michael Duncan Overton. I am a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Tennessee, completing my dissertation. I am writing to invite you to participate in a **research** study. The purpose of the study is to explore adult learners' lived experiences of learning and practicing martial arts.

#### **Information About Participants' Involvement in the Study**

The study will consist of the primary researcher (Michael Duncan Overton) conducting an interview with you, which will ask you to tell me or show me your story of learning and practicing the martial arts. The interview will last approximately one hour or until you feel that you have nothing more to say. The information will be collected using an audio recording device which will be stored in a locked office safe when not in use by the primary researcher (Michael Duncan Overton). The primary researcher (Michael Duncan Overton) will be the only one with access to the recordings and I will transcribe them verbatim. Once the interviews are transcribed I will send you a copy to review, if you wish, and you will be able to make any comments to the transcriptions. These transcriptions will then be analyzed and the findings and direct quotes will be reported for use in my dissertation.

There is also an optional demographic survey, which will be provided accompanying this consent form. This information will be stored in a locked office safe when not in use by the primary researcher (Michael Duncan Overton). The primary researcher (Michael Duncan Overton) will be the only one with access to the data. The data from the demographic survey will be used to verify your criteria for participation in this study. The data from the demographic survey will also be used to assist in forming a more complete picture of you as a martial artist.

All data will be kept for one year after its collection or until the study is complete, whichever comes first. At that time the data will be erased, shredded, and/or destroyed.

#### **Risks**

While there are minimal risks associated with this study, talking about past experiences can be emotional at times and may bring about uncomfortable feelings. If this is the case, the participant is able to skip over any questions or discontinue the interview at any time at no penalty.

#### **Benefits**

The anticipated benefits achieved from this research will be the expansion of martial arts research to include the stories and experiences of advanced martial artists. There is also an anticipated benefit of enriching the field of adult learning by illustrating an other way of knowing that is more holistic and incorporates the mind and body into the meaning making

process. The participant's participation will help me in completion toward my Ph.D. and give me valuable experience as a new researcher.

### **Confidentiality**

All information in the study records will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely in a locked office and will be made available only to persons conducting the study unless participants specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link participants to the study. Your identity will be kept confidential by assigning a pseudonym or alias, of your choosing, to ensure confidentiality. Also, any identifying information of specific people and specific places will be modified to ensure your anonymity and that of those in your story.

### **Contact Information**

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study,) you may contact the researcher, Michael Duncan Overton, at [moverto2@vols.utk.edu](mailto:moverto2@vols.utk.edu), or his advisor, Dr. Ralph Brockett at [brockett@utk.edu](mailto:brockett@utk.edu). If you have questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact the University of Tennessee IRB Compliance Officer at [utkirb@utk.edu](mailto:utkirb@utk.edu) or (865) 974-7697.

### **Participation**

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be destroyed and not used for this study.

---

## **CONSENT**

I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's Name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Embodied practice: A narrative exploration of adult learners' lived experiences of learning martial arts in the southeastern United States of America**  
**Demographic Survey**

## APPENDIX E

### Interview Protocol

#### **Beginning Script**

Before we start I would like to give you an opportunity to go over the informed consent statement with me and ask any questions you have about it or this study.

- Go over informed consent statement.
  - Highlight the confidentiality section
    - Use of pseudonyms
    - Ask if they have a preferred pseudonym
  - Highlight the voluntary participation and withdraw section
- Have participant sign the informed consent statement.
- Ask if they will fill out the demographic survey.

Now that we have gone over the informed consent statement I would like to tell you a little bit about myself and what this study is about. I have been practicing martial arts (judo and jujitsu) since 2002. I have been in a volunteer teaching capacity for the martial arts since 2007 and an official teaching capacity since 2014. I have been in graduate school since 2012 and I am finishing my Ph. D. This study brings together my love of the martial arts and interest in research. The purpose of this study is to explore what your experience of learning and practicing the martial arts is. The reason that I am interested in your experience is due to the criteria that you embody; you are an: (a) adult learner and (b) advanced martial artist. Your story is missing from the research literature on martial arts, and I think that it is a crucial piece to a larger puzzle. This study may also aid the adult learning field of research by illustrating how the martial arts are potentially an “other way of knowing” that incorporates the body and mind together in the meaning making process.

As mentioned in the informed consent statement I will use an audio recording device for this interview. Is that okay with you?

Also I would like to take brief notes to make sure that I am not missing anything important that may come out of this interview. Is that okay with you?

Before I get into the interview question I would like to ask you some questions to establish a basic background. If you would, tell me about your background?

**Question #1**

- 1) How did you get started in the martial arts?
  - a) What led you to...?
  - b) Why this practice?
    - i) Why this/those/these martial arts?

**Question #2**

- 2) What does your/this practice [martial art(s)] mean to you?

**Question #3**

- 3) What does it mean to you to talk of your experience vs. to show of your experiences?

**Question #4**

- 4) Participants for this study were required to be an advanced student, not beginners or teachers, why or how do you identify as an advanced student?
  - a) Dialogue about the ways that you identify as an advanced martial artist.

**Question #5**

- 5) Tell me about a time when you realized you identify as an advanced martial artist?
  - a) What happened?

**Question #6**

- 6) How does practicing martial arts also show up in your life outside of the dojo/practice space?
- a) Reflect on how practicing martial arts also shows up in your life outside of the dojo/practice space

**Ending Script**

Thank you for sharing your time and experiences/stories with me. Is there anything else that you would like to add before we conclude this interview?

From here I will transcribe this interview word for word and send you a copy of the transcript, if you wish, so that you can check to make sure everything was captured accurately and also to provide feedback on anything that was left out. If you have any questions for me please contact me at the information provided on the informed consent statement, or you may contact my advisor, or the IRB compliance officer listed in the informed consent statement as well.

## VITA

Duncan Overton obtained his PhD in Educational Psychology from the University of Tennessee in December 2017. His MS in Educational Psychology was completed at the University of Tennessee in December 2014. Duncan worked for nearly four years as a graduate research assistant for the Educational Psychology department. In this capacity, he has worked as an internal administrative support assistant conducting literature searches and reviews as well as editing manuscripts and journal articles. He has worked as a website manager for the Adult Learning concentration within the Educational Psychology department and has collaborated on project development and implementation through interdepartmental communications, recruiting, and conference presentations.

Most recently this collaboration with departmental faculty has led to the creation of Let's Talk QUAL, a gathering designed to promote qualitative research for the university and surrounding community. Because of these and other collaborations Duncan has presented research at: American Association for Adult and Continuing Education Conference, Adult Education Research Conference, International Self-Directed Learning Symposium, American Association of Behavioral and Social Sciences, International Congress of Psychology, Action Research Network of the Americas, Ethnographic and Qualitative Research Conference, and 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on Higher Education Advances.

Since beginning the PhD program, Duncan has also worked as a staff instructor for the Physical Education Activity Program (PEAP) at the University of Tennessee. He has been responsible for teaching the Judo and Jujitsu classes within the PEAP department. On top of these teaching opportunities, Duncan has been asked to be a guest lecturer for the Educational Psychology department. Topics covered during these opportunities focused on positionality and

embodied practice, embodiment and transformative learning, paradigms in qualitative research, and grounded theory and other critical theories.

Duncan has also provided other services to the University of Tennessee, serving as an assistant instructor, student representative, peer reviewer for SAGE, self-defense coordinator for FUTURE program, Let's Talk QUAL co-facilitator and planner, and Undergraduate Research and Creative Achievement exhibition judge. In recognition of this service Duncan has been nominated, along with collaborators, for the 2017 John, H. Tunstall Award and the Graduate Student Senate Preparing the Professoriate Graduate Program of the Year 2017 for Let's Talk QUAL.

Duncan has a publication in *Universitat Politècnica de València Press* and has presented at international, national, and regional conferences including: American Association for Adult and Continuing Education Conference, Adult Education Research Conference, International Self-Directed Learning Symposium, American Association of Behavioral and Social Sciences, International Congress of Psychology, Action Research Network of the Americas, Ethnographic and Qualitative Research Conference, and 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on Higher Education Advances.

Duncan's current research trajectory focuses on embodiment and transformative learning, specifically other-ways-of-knowing. The theoretical framework developed for his dissertation needs more exposure and use to be thoroughly explored.